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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE:

LINGUISTICS SECTION

The differences in medium of instruction for the Lower Primary Phase in teacher education and schools in Namibia, with reference to the Kavango educational region, are a barrier to effective teaching and learning.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER IN APPLIED LANGUAGE AND AFRICAN LINGUISTICS

By

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is my own and other sources that I have used and quoted have been acknowledged with complete references.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study aims to investigate whether the difference in the language of teaching in teacher education and the language of teaching in the lower primary phase is a barrier for effective teaching and learning in the targeted institutions. Furthermore, would additional focus on mother tongue education in teacher education benefit educational achievement in the Kavango educational region specifically and in Namibia as a whole?

The focus of the study is the interaction between teacher educators and their student teachers during teacher-training sessions as well as the interaction between teachers and learners in the lower primary phase at the target school. In both classroom observations, these interactions include how teacher educators deal with subject content, and how student teachers respond, comment and offer critical thinking about what is being taught in class. In addition, the work produced by student teachers and learners was considered to be part of the interactions experienced in this study.

This study uses a qualitative approach in that it was conducted through interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussion and focus group interviewing as research instruments. Findings confirm that the use of different languages as medium of instruction for training teachers in the training institutions and for teaching in the lower primary phase creates difficulties for many teachers in the selected school. These difficulties affect the pedagogical aspect negatively. Formal and informal discussion with other educators during the investigation reinforced this view. However, there was some dispute among participants with respect to the degree of support for the findings.

In the selected school, the study found that expecting teachers trained in English, (a language rarely used in the school community in daily communication) to translate the knowledge and skills gained during training for learners in the mother tongue hampered effective teaching. The findings indicate, among other things, low participation rates of student teachers during training sessions and misleading, even wrong, translations from English to Rukwangali of concepts which are central to the realisation of the curriculum. Therefore, the general conclusion and specific recommendation of the study is that a mother tongue-based bilingual approach should be introduced in the teacher training programme, especially for teachers who will work in the lower primary phase.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late mother Secilia Vihemba Mbundu who departed from us during the first year of my studies.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First I would like to thank my family members, especially my husband Gervasius Hausiku and my children Mukuve, Namvhura, Harusanga and Nashira, for their patience and support during my study and my absence from home. I would like to thank the participants for their contributions made to this study. A special word of thanks to my supervisor , Prof. Neville Alexander, for guidance throughout the completion of my thesis. Special thanks also to PRAESA and the Leistrade scholarship for their financial support.

University of Cape Town

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# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

## **1.1 THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1.1 Historical Context**

Namibia consists of thirteen political regions, and the Kavango education region is one of them. In Kavango, majority people more especially in rural areas use only vernacular in their social practices and hardly use western language as English or Afrikaans. On one hand, research reveals that formal education in Namibia was introduced only in 1884 (Cohen 1994, Katzao 1999, Harlech-Jones 1995), though there was pioneering work in western education done by Wesleyan missionaries by 1805 (Amukugo 1993: 40). According to Amukugo, each category of missionaries during the pre-apartheid period in Namibia preferred a different language as the medium of instruction, for various reasons. Catholics and Anglicans chose English, while the Finnish preferred the Oshindonga language (Amukugo 1993: 43). Oshindonga is one of the indigenous languages in Owamboland, today known as the Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena and Otjikoto political regions. I assume that the Finnish missionaries chose Oshindonga as the medium of instruction as they wanted their pupils to understand what was being taught and were themselves willing to learn the language.

In 1925 Afrikaans the dominant lingua franca was chosen by the Finnish Lutheran mission to serve as the medium of communication in Namibia. By the 1950, Afrikaans was spoken by the majority in Namibia, thus Afrikaans was used as a medium of instruction in Namibian schools including Kavango educational region, Harlech-Jones, (1990) cited in (Tötemeyer 2010: 9).

In the colonial era, during the time of Bantu Education, Afrikaans was the dominant language in schools, though today English (a foreign language) has taken over. Afrikaans was spoken as a home language by some groups in Namibia such as the Khoesan (Tötemeyer 2010 Endnote 2-4). In Kavango, however, Afrikaans was only spoken occasionally at work, in schools and in offices. The difficulties encountered in understanding subject content taught in Afrikaans during the colonial era in some parts of Namibia such as Kavango educational region, are the same ones encountered now, when English is used. From previous research (Pütz, 1995: 178-179), the researcher learned that the only benefit for Namibians in replacing Afrikaans with English as the medium of instruction is that, worldwide, English is the national language in 29 countries and is an official language in 44 countries (including Namibia), while Afrikaans is only used in South Africa and Namibia.

During the process of becoming independent, the Namibian Government discussed means and ways for national reconstruction and development to occur. The official document, *Towards Education For All* explains how the education system needs to be implemented through the four main Government goals: Access, Quality, Equity and Democracy (MEC 1993: 32-42).

Providing quality education to the nation was a burning issue; the Government wanted to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills at teacher-training institutions such as colleges and other tertiary institutions. Language policy review and teacher education reform were some of the initiatives in the education system implemented at independence.

### **1.1.2. Current Language in Policy in Education**

At independence of Namibia in 1990, only a small portion of the Namibian population could speak, read and write English (Töttemeyer 2010:10). Because of the change from Afrikaans medium to English medium of instruction, both teachers and learners were in a state of panic and always suffered from anxiety in their teaching or learning (Töttemeyer 2010:15).

This year 2010, Namibia celebrates 20 years of independence, and the language policy for schools, higher education and tertiary education has been reviewed. Cohen (1994: 241) states that the emphasis on English in teacher training was needed at independence because English was chosen to become the official language in Namibia, replacing the Afrikaans that was dominant in education during the colonial period. Currently, the language policy stipulates mother-tongue education in the Lower Primary Phase (grades 1 - 3). Grade 4 is the transitional year, in which the medium of instruction is English and mother tongue languages are taken as a subject in schools. This continues from grade 5 to grade 12, and into education at tertiary level (Language Policy for Schools in Namibia 2003: 4-5). This is in line with the policy of using an indigenous language as a medium of instruction adopted by the Finnish missionaries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Harlech-Jones 1990).

On the other hand, the same language policy also made provision for parents or the school to use English as the medium of instruction in the Lower Primary Phase, on permission being obtained from the Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture with a well-grounded, convincing motivation. This is in line with the Constitution Art.3 section 2 which stipulates: “Nothing contained in this Constitution shall prohibit the use of any other language as a medium of instruction in private schools or in schools financed or subsidised by the State, subject to compliance with such requirements as may be imposed by law, to ensure proficiency in the official language, or for pedagogic reasons” (p.3)

### **1.1.3 The need for Teacher Education Reform**

On the cover page of the study of Zeichner and Dahlström (1999) title, Democratic Teacher Education Reform in Africa, they explain why Namibia wanted to transform its education system:

At independence, the new SWAPO Government sought to transform the country's education system from one that educated elites to one that provided high-quality, basic education of at least ten years for all Namibians.

A central aspect of these reform efforts has been the improvement of teacher education for basic education and the professional development of teacher educators.

This statement implies that teachers needed to be well-prepared in order to provide quality teaching and enhance learning in schools. In addition, Zeichner and Dahlström (1999: 39) state that the new system should emphasize the importance of the teaching being learner-centred rather than teacher-centred, as it was in the old system. For this reason, the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) was initiated. According to Pomuti (2000), the BETD training program is intended to provide trainees with reflective practices in their classrooms. In terms of its curriculum, the BETD program is better than previous programs, such as the Lower Primary Teachers Certificate (LPTC), the Education Certificate Primary (ECP) and the Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) offered in teacher training institutions in Namibia during the colonial era.

The understanding here is that, the new philosophy of teacher training is that teachers need to understand their classes' expectations fully in order to be able to reflect on their daily teaching and improve the next lesson where possible. Again, they can only be reflective if they understand what they have learned, what they are teaching in schools and why they are teaching children. If they do not, their teaching will be fruitless.

## **1.2 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

I am a language practitioner. Currently I serve the Ministry of Education in Namibia as an Inspector of Education. My concern for the problem identified encouraged me to choose the research question as stated below for this investigation. Among other responsibilities, I supervise and monitor the implementation of the national curriculum and the implementation of any other Ministry of Education policies, and also investigate problems in schools to find solutions and advise where necessary (MEC 2008). With this study, I would like to assess the impact of one aspect of language policy on teaching in the lower primary phase.

In Namibia, each political region has a different background in terms of development, depending on various factors such as the way of living, cultures and beliefs, infrastructure, and the way educational matters are viewed – for example, language in education. The consequences of these differences were and are observed in the different regions. In the Kavango political region, these differences are also observed between local areas and school communities. Such differences might perhaps create difficulties for schools in implementing and operating under a single language policy across the whole country. Thus, language policy in Namibia tends to be problematic, because each region and each school community is unique. Most communities in the rural areas of the Kavango educational region use mother tongue (for example, Rukwangali, Rumanyo, Thimbukushu and other languages originating in Angola) as the language of communication. English is only used for official purposes at work; and at other government institutions like schools, as a medium of instruction, or it is taught as

a subject. After school and at home, children revert to their mother tongue for smooth communication with their peers or parents.

Thus, in my view, in this region (and especially in the rural areas) English should be classified as a foreign language – not even as a second language, as it is considered to be by the Ministry of Education.

The current situation is that the teacher training institution in Kavango educational region (formerly the Rundu College of Education) has merged with the University of Namibia from 1 April 2010. The Rundu College of Education previously operated under the Ministry of Higher Education in Namibia, but now it falls under the University of Namibia. This institution had offered a three-year course (the Basic Education Teacher Diploma) for the three school phases (Lower Primary, Upper Primary and Junior Secondary). But since it has become a ‘branch’ of the University of Namibia, it will offer more advanced courses, for a Bachelor of Education degree. Only the 2011 third-year student teachers will be allowed to continue and complete the old program (BETD); all others will do the new course.

So far, this change only touches the course programme; the language policy will remain the same as in the past. This means that teacher training will still be conducted in English. For 2010, the student body in the Lower Primary Phase field of studies consists of students who speak the wide range of indigenous local languages, such as Rukwangali, Rumanyo and Thimbukushu including other languages spoken in Angola. On completion of their training these student teachers are expected to teach in the speech communities where each will feel confident using the indigenous language of the particular school community

These differences in the language for teacher education (English) and the language of teaching (mother tongue) in schools motivated me to embark upon this study, to learn from the research participants how they deal with this situation in practice. I assumed there must be challenges and constraints for teachers using mother tongue as a medium of instruction although they received training in English. In my experience as a member of the Kavango community, I have observed that despite the lack of proficiency in English among us, many school communities (including some teachers) still prefer the implementation of English as the medium of instruction to start from grade 1 all the way through to tertiary education. Using English as the medium of instruction in teacher education in Namibia, brought me to think about what Milton Obote the former president of Uganda stated:

“I am well aware that English cannot be the media (sic) to express Dingidingi songs. I have my doubt whether Lwo Language can express in all its fineness Lusonga songs, and yet I consider that Uganda’s policy to teach more and more English should be matched with the teaching of some other African Language, (cited in Alexander 1989:40).

In my view, Namibia’s language policy has the same consequences as that of Uganda referred to here, i.e., the policy might inhibit native speakers of the local languages from strengthening their culture and beliefs. However, in education, I assume that most parents want their children to speak English, the global language that will give them job security, Kamwangamalu (2001) cited in Braam (2004:9). On the other hand, parents want their

children also to maintain their indigenous language so that they can practice their culture and norms by expressing themselves well and correctly where necessary.

My hypothesis is that teachers trained in a foreign language to teach in an indigenous language do not teach effectively and their teaching does not enhance effective learning, i.e., specifically in schools in the Kavango educational region.

In my view, this situation limits effective teaching in the Lower Primary Phase. Ineffective teaching may affect learners negatively and weaken the foundation of their schooling. When learners build their education on a weak foundation, they perform poorly throughout their schooling. Therefore, I consider this study to be important in highlighting challenges and difficulties that stakeholders might encounter through the current language policy in the Namibian education system.

My assumption is that (among other problems), the language policy for teacher education is one of the contributing factors to this problem. English-trained teachers find it difficult to transmit knowledge and skills acquired during their training to learners.

In my view, the current language policy in teacher education might not be a solution for the various Kavango school communities. In addition, a uniform language policy is comparable to the old education system that forced Afrikaans on teacher-training institutions. I think that the Namibian education system contradicts itself by training Lower Primary Phase student teachers in English and expecting them to teach Lower Primary Phase in a mother tongue. In working with teachers in schools, I do not see that such a policy benefits graduates or their teaching.

### **1.3 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.3.1 Main Research Question:**

How does the language policy for teacher education benefit teachers and their teaching in the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia, with specific reference to the Kavango educational region?

#### **1.3.2 Sub-Questions:**

- (i) What challenges or constraints do teachers face in teaching the Lower Primary Phase in the Kavango educational region in their mother tongue while they were trained through the English medium of instruction?
- (ii) Would more focus on Mother Tongue Education in teacher education benefit educational achievement in Namibia?

#### 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Previous researchers in this field focused on Namibia as a whole, and their findings only described the general situation of the whole country. This study focuses on one specific part of the country – the Kavango community and the analysis relates to one specific school community. This intense focus makes it possible, on the basis of careful observations and interviews, to arrive at very sound evidence and conclusions.

In addition, the period of this research is significant, as the current situation in schools is very different to what it was previously during the apartheid period.

#### 1.5 CLARIFICATION OF KEYWORDS IN THE STUDY

Each country has a rule/law that guides the nation on which language(s) is/are to be used in their public institutions like schools, hospitals, police stations and post offices. For ease of understanding and consistency, some keywords used in this study are defined in this section.

**Language policy** represents the decision-making process, formally stated or implicitly used to decide *which* languages will be taught to (or learned by) *whom* for *what* purposes (Cooper, 1989:31) cited in Baldauf (1993-1994:83). According to Legère (1996:42) cited in NERA (2000:33), *language policy* is described as:

that part of the political concept which deals with the linguistic situation in a given country and its intended change along the lines perceived by political or social groups and parties. It is the politically motivated attitude towards a language or languages, in particular their role and use in domains which are directly controlled by these political and social groups. A language policy may be formulated by groups of different social or political profile, but its implementation is mostly confined to the ruling class which controls the State and its institutions. However, even circles which are not in power may pursue their language policy and implement it within domains which are either beyond the control of the State or where the State is not much interested. The language policy of a given country may be expressed in policy statements by ruling circles as well as by the opposition or other groups, and may be subsequently entrenched in a Constitution or other legal documents.

*Foreign language* refers to a language not normally used or widely understood in a country.

*Medium of instruction* is the language that Government prescribes to be used by teachers to communicate the subject contents to the learners.

*First language* is the language that a child uses to communicate with his/her family members in the daily activities.

*Second language* refers to any other language the child regularly comes across and uses in play or schooling.

*National language* is a language which the majority are able to use to understand one another in a specific country).

*Official language* refers to a prescribed language chosen by the Government to use for official purposes/communications in a country (Ministry of Basic Education (Sport and Culture) 2003: 6-8).

*Advisory teachers* in this study refers to subject specialist personnel recruited by the ministry of education who go around to schools and render support and their subject expertise to teachers in the particular subject or school phase.

*Teacher educators* refer to professionals whose job is to prepare and train student teachers at the teacher training institutions.

*School boards* are selected parents in a school community who serve as representatives of parents of the children who attend the school in which the study was carried out.

*Quality teaching/learning* refers to teaching and learning that is meaningful to both parties involved, and in this case those who conducted teaching and the receivers of that particular teaching. Also it is teaching the outcomes of which the receivers/learners can apply in their daily practices on their own. On quality teaching and learning, Stones (1992) argues that effective teaching/learning in teacher education is not telling or convincing students about a certain topic or subject content, but for the recipients to understand fully what it is all about in order to be able to apply the knowledge they acquired during training.

*Additive language learning* (Cummins 2000:72), means that a new language is learned in addition to the mother tongue which continues to be used and developed.



***Subtractive language learning*** means that a new language is learned at the cost of the mother tongue.

***Learning*** is defined as a change of behaviour as a result of what a person has experienced, in thinking, feeling and the way she or he does things (Mwamwenda, 1989:121). Gee (1989) sees ***learning*** as a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching, though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher; and it inherently involves attaining (along with the matter being taught) some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter. Thus Pomuti (2000:9-10) states that the constructivism theory of knowledge and learning stresses that ***learning*** is an active process whereby individuals are encouraged to construct meaning for themselves and create knowledge by sharing experience with others through collaborative interaction, because knowledge is constructed in the mind of the individual and learning takes place through the process of transformation and self-regulation.

***Basic interpersonal communication skill (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)***: These two concepts deal with the period of time in which a child acquires a second language. BICS describes the situation where a child has acquired conversational fluency in a second language, while CALP describes the situation where a child has acquired grade-appropriate academic proficiency in a second language (Cummins, 1979).

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the literature review is to learn from what previous researchers have found regarding the phenomena under investigation. Every reference read may be sweet, but each has a different taste; in other words, what is important is not how much the researcher read about the topic, but how much meaning the researcher was able to extract from the readings and how relevant the readings were to the topic – in this study, the impact of differences in the medium of instruction on teaching and learning in teacher education and on teaching in the lower primary phase, with specific reference to the Kavango educational region in Namibia. Therefore, it was necessary to review only literature that could influence and inform my study. Throughout the reporting process in this study, the researcher has drawn from the literature to support the findings, statements and arguments made. The next paragraph outlines the literature review chapter of my study.

This chapter has six main sections. Since the investigation involves language issues, it was suggested that the focus of the first section must be to clarify what language is, as well as its significance in education.

The second section summarises the history of the Language in Education Programme in Namibia, with specific reference to Kavango. The third section describes the language policy for schools in Namibia. The fourth section deals with the relevant theoretical points of departure for my study, namely language and culture; the dominance and hegemony of English; and linguistic transfer. The fifth section reviews claims made for Mother Tongue Education, while the last section discusses the implications of the situation for teacher education.

### **2.2 LANGUAGE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN EDUCATION**

Goodman (1989:8) sees language as a tool that enables humans to share their experience, learn from one another, plan together and enhance their intellect by linking their minds with those of other humans. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:205) describes language as a tool, a mediator

and an active agent, central to our conceptualisation (and indeed, our creation) of the world, and essential for interpreting and understanding. It is a particular kind of system for encoding and decoding information. Also language can be seen as a system that is predicable in different situations depending on the use of words and sentence structures. The grammar, meaning of words and the sounds differ from one language to another. In this view, language is seen as the utterance of sounds or making of gestures that is accepted by a certain group of people for communicating their views, thoughts or experiences. This is why Wittgenstein, an Austrian philosopher, believed that “*The limits of my language means the limits of my world.*” (cited in Flower 1966:52). Wittgenstein’s statement implies that without words or utterances – whether oral, written or through other semiotic signs – humans could not share their views, opinions and experiences, or send messages. A system must exist to allow people to communicate and to interact, whether in homes (between parents and children or between siblings), churches (between church leaders and followers or audiences), offices (between employers and employees), or schools (between teachers and learners, or between learners and their peers). Therefore, in this case study, language- and more especially, mother tongue- is seen as a crucial issue, and its significant role in teaching and learning in schools will be discussed in depth.

My view is connected to the argument of Fasold (1984), cited in Rubagumya (1989:1), who emphasised the importance of considering the level of students in choosing the medium of instruction, to judge whether students know the language well enough to learn effectively through it.

### **2.3 THE HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME IN NAMIBIA, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO KAVANGO**

Formal education in Namibia was introduced early in the 1800s by missionaries (Harlech-Jones, 1990:47-48). Anza Lema and Rodney, in Amukugo (1993:33), point out that the colonisers did not introduce Africa to education, but they did introduce a new set of formal educational institutions, which partly supplemented and partly replaced those which were there before. Namibians were managing their lives in their own ways, suitable to their norms, traditions and customs, when the missionaries arrived in the country and intervened.

Namibian parents (including those of the Kavango community) were able to interact with their children, through the language of their choice, to educate them regarding what tasks needed to be done and by whom. In addition, at that time the nation had procedures for dealing with any conflicts between families or neighbourhoods; these matters were judged by their leaders, called 'Hompa' in the Rukwangali language (meaning 'Chief' or 'Captain' in English). All these deliberations took place in the mother tongue of the people. In some cases mother tongue played a very significant role, serving the purpose of retaining names of local trees or other untranslatable terms in a particular indigenous language, according to Catford (in Halliday, 1964:21).

The intervention of the missionaries and the colonial regime marks the beginning of separate education in the Namibian nation, which has seen differences from region to region since 1884. For various reasons, the education policy implemented during this period emphasised foreign languages (such as German, Afrikaans and later English) as the medium of instruction in African education. Cohen, in the conclusion to her study on education during the German occupation from 1884-1915, states that at the end of German rule in 1915, South West Africa (now known as Namibia) had two separate systems of education: one for the indigenous people, run entirely by the missionaries and differentiating between coloureds and blacks, and one for whites that was predominantly government-run and which provided superior education (1994:79). The 'separateness' of the education systems was emphasised: separate curricula, syllabi and facilities were developed under separate departments (Harlech-Jones, 1990:54-59).

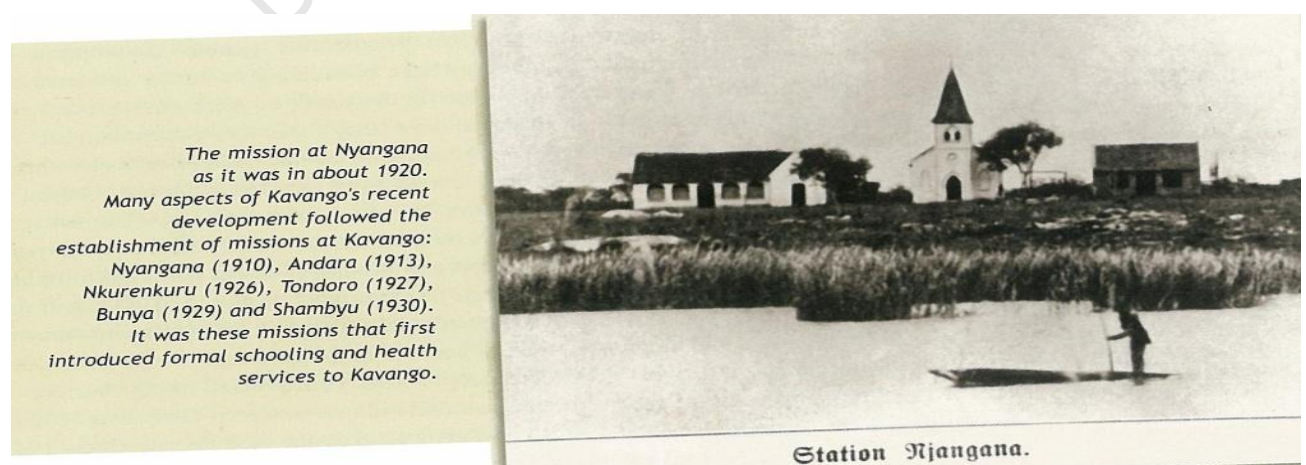
The resulting negative effect on teaching and learning didn't single out the Kavango community; indeed, it made every region unique in that each is at a different developmental stage, though found in the same country. Before independence of Namibia, differences between regions were observed; in the provision of infrastructure, financing of education, administration, and different curricula (Harlech-Jones, 1990:70-71). The past segregation of regions, nations and tribes by the colonial regime has contributed much to the passivity and reluctance to participate of people in education (Katzao, 1999:21-39 and Amukugo, 1993:46-50). Poor teaching and learning result, because of the disparities caused by various conditions in schools such as poor teacher training, and lack of foreign-language proficiency by native-speaker teachers who seldom use a foreign language (German, Afrikaans) as the medium of

instruction. Under German rule, subtractive language learning was the model used, in which the mother tongue of native-speakers was only allowed to serve as the medium of instruction for a short period. As noted by Harlech-Jones (1990:48), during a conference in 1933 the decision was taken to use mother tongue as the medium of instruction for the first three years of school (sub A, sub B and Standard 1; that is, grades 1 to 3 in today's education system), to be followed by Afrikaans. Various rulers (including missionaries) were pleased with this since it meant they could reach their intended goals with the education they offered. Cohen (1994:63) quotes the following speech by Carl Schlettwein, an independent farmer of high standing in the colonial community of South West Africa in 1908, which indicates one of the ideas behind the former education policy for the Namibian nation:

The land at present available in our colony (excluding Ovamboland) is suitable for European settlement. We cannot carry out this settlement, however, without additional labour. This must be provided by the native and we shall train them for it. Our policies will therefore be those of masters of the country. We shall make people realise that we Germans are the masters of the country, and the natives the servants whose welfare depends on the advantages of their masters.

In the Kavango political region, formal education was introduced (also by missionaries) in the early 1900s. The first schooling was offered at Nkurenkuru in 1909 (Mandelson & Obeid, 2003:89). A typical mission of the time (around 1920) is shown in Fig. 1 below.

Fig.1: Nyangana, one of the Missions in Kavango in the early 1900s.



According to Mandelson & Obeid (2003:78-80) the population of Kavango has changed rapidly in recent decades, due to the war in Angola, which brought many Angolan refugees. This increased the number of children in Kavango to about half the total population, and the Namibian Government needs to provide education for them. The same study reveals that almost half the people in Kavango speak Rukwangali, while an Angolan language (namely Nyemba) is the home language of about one-fifth of the population.

During the time not long before Namibian independence, the number of schools grew but segregation and separate education continued; black Africans still could not enrol at any school of their choice. This created the inequalities, causing Namibians to lag behind neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Botswana in terms of quality education. The new government had to redress the imbalances created by the colonial regime and prepare the nation for a better future. Thus, at independence, the 'Education For All' policy was introduced; the Ministry of Education was to provide access (schools/infrastructure for schooling in all corners of the country), equity (fair distribution of resources – including human resources – to all schools), quality (sufficient teaching and learning) and democracy (allowing any child the right and freedom to enrol at any school of his or her choice) (MEC, 1993:31-42). Among other actions taken, teacher education was reformed and a language policy for schools in Namibia was reviewed and put in place.

## **2.4 LANGUAGE POLICY FOR SCHOOLS IN NAMIBIA**

Pütz (1995) indicates that German lost its status as the official medium of instruction in 1915, and other Western European-derived languages (such as English and Afrikaans) took over as the medium of instruction in Namibia, and in Kavango in particular.

In 1990 the Namibian government said goodbye to Afrikaans, and English was recommended as the sole medium of instruction from grades 4 to 12, as well as at tertiary and teacher-training institutions.

At the time of independence, the Ministry of Education noticed the need to look critically into the matter of the quality of education that the former government provided to the Namibian nation. They reviewed the function of the administration of schools, tertiary institutions such as colleges and the formulation of language policies that enhance quality teaching and learning in these institutions. The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training (1999: 108-9) recommended the Ministry of Education to develop and promote a language policy for schools and colleges in Namibia. It suggested that children in the

foundation phase (grades 1 to 3) should receive teaching in the mother tongue or a predominant local language of the particular school community and have English as a second language; grade four should be a transitional year, in which the medium of instruction changes from mother tongue to English, and children still learn their mother tongue as a subject. If parents in a particular school wish to use English as a medium of instruction in the Lower primary phase, permission must be obtained from the Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture with a well-grounded, convincing motivation. (MBEC, 2003:4-5).

This started the focus on education reform – moving from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. Mother-tongue instruction was strengthened in the Lower Primary Phase in order to lay a solid foundation for each individual child. Education institutions were required to implement programmes that see the learner as the central point for teaching, and allow the involvement of individual learners in classroom deliberations. Erichsen and Muurholm (2001:11) point out that the learner-centred approach helps learners to learn with understanding, and to participate in classroom activities.

The table below illustrates the use and function of indigenous language in the Namibian educational system (including Kavango) since 1993 (Language Policy for Schools and Colleges in Namibia, 2003:4-5).

*Table 1: Language Policy for Namibian Schools.*

Language	Level of Education	Function
Mother tongue	Lower Primary Phase (Grades 1-3)	Mother tongue serves as medium of instruction
Mother tongue	Lower Primary, Grade 4 as transitional year.	Mother tongue as a subject
Mother tongue	Upper Primary (Grades 5-7)	Mother tongue as a subject
Mother tongue	Junior Secondary Phase (Grades 8-10)	Mother tongue as a subject
Mother tongue	Senior Secondary Phase (Grades 11-12)	Mother tongue as a subject
Mother tongue	Higher Education and Teacher training	Only few modules of mother tongue to those specialising in languages
English (second language)	Lower Primary Phase (Grades 1-3)	English serves as subject
English (second language)	Lower Primary, Grade 4 as transitional year.	English serves as medium of instruction
English (second language)	Upper Primary Phase (Grades 5-7)	English serves as medium of instruction
English (second language)	Junior Secondary Phase (Grades 8-10).	English serves as medium of instruction
English (second language)	Senior Secondary Phase (Grades 11-12).	English serves as medium of instruction
English (second language)	Higher Education and Teacher training	English serves as medium of instruction
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Namibia is a multilingual country (Harlech-Jones, 1990:101). Each language belongs in one of three categories, namely the Bantu family, the Khoesan family and the European family (Harlech-Jones, 1990:31-32; Pütz, 1995:158). *Mother tongue*, in the Namibian educational system, refers to Afrikaans, German, Ju/'hoan, Khoekhoegowab, Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Otjiherero, RuManyo, RuKwangali, Setswana, Silozi, Thimbukushu and other languages recognised by the Ministry for its purpose (MEC, 1993:64-66).<sup>1</sup>

It is evident from the above table that English is dominant in the education system of Namibia. This contradicts what researchers such as Senkoro (in Brock-Utne *et al*, 2003: 50) have stressed: that it is the right of teachers to teach and learners to be taught in their mother tongue (the language they fully understand) for better understanding of what is being taught, in order for them to participate in the classroom discussion. Senkoro (in Brock-Utne *et al*, 2003) points out that when teachers, student teachers or learners receive education in a language other than the language spoken at home, they are robbed of their democratic right. The provision in the language policy for schools in Namibia which allows school communities and schools to apply to the Minister of Basic Education to obtain permission to take languages other than mother tongue of the school community as the medium of instruction from Grade 1 constitutes, therefore, a serious threat to the realisation of this democratic right.

The criteria being used to determine the medium of instruction in teacher education for the lower primary phase in Namibia are not convincing, and cast doubt on the government's desire for effective teaching and learning in schools. Another crucial question is the following: are three years of mother-tongue education (subtractive language learning) enough for a child to lay the solid foundation he or she needs to establish the second language instructional competence necessary for success in school work?

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In the school where this study was carried out the mother tongue is RuKwangali, which belongs to the Bantu linguistic family.



## 2.5. THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR MY STUDY

### 2.5.1. *Language and Culture*

May (1962:134) noticed the importance of the link between a particular language and its culture, because much of any culture is verbally constructed through its songs and prayers; its laws and proverbs; its history, philosophy and teachings. One can only learn the extent of the culture of a particular group through what is mentioned via its language.

The language policy for schools in Namibia faces the same dangers as in the Ugandan situation referred to here; i.e. the policy might inhibit native speakers of the local languages, preventing them from strengthening their culture and beliefs, or from making jokes. Ndjoze-Ojo (2000:81) (cited in Totemeyer 2010:62) made the following statement: ‘Namibia cannot with one language promote indigenous development especially, when that language is not indigenous. We as a nation need to promote and preserve our...indigenous languages. Thus scholars such as Fishman (cited in May, 2001:135) conclude and recommend: “mother tongue has an important role to play in the process of individual and aggregative self-definition and self-realisation, not merely as a myth.” Furthermore, Flower (1966:25-27) argues that language shapes the behaviour of human beings to an extent. In addition, he argues that “languages are a form of behaviour not to be seen as something outside or apart from the human beings that speak it... and it is the typical behaviour of the speech community.”

Linguists such as Catford (1964, cited in Halliday, 1965:1) also argue that language is patterned behaviour, and it is seen that way because human beings interact differently depending on the social situation in which they are involved at any given moment. Each time a performer utters a certain sound or term in a particular language (which may be a medium of instruction) to a hearer in a certain situation (including in the classroom) or event, his or her voice and tone are influenced by that particular event or situation he or she is in at that moment; in class, or in church, or at a wedding ceremony.

The concern was, how many parents in Kavango are knowledgeable in this aspect, when they choose the medium of instruction for their children. Regarding this dilemma, NERA (2000:30) reports that the choice of medium of instruction is a complex decision which contributes vitally towards educational success or failure.

### ***2.5.2. Dominance and hegemony of English***

Despite these concerns, as alluded to earlier, education systems in many developing countries (including Namibia, and in Kavango in particular) train teachers in other languages than those that graduates are expected to use in schools – and assume that teachers can easily transfer knowledge and skills from a foreign language into their mother tongue and vice versa. Since many parents want their children to speak English, sometimes for reasons of job security, they motivate their children to choose English above their mother tongue, and this hinders the quality of teaching and learning in many schools (Munganda, cited in Beckett (ed.) 2000:73-74). Another reason why English is promoted in many countries is African indigenous native-speakers' value western languages above their mother tongue. One participant in Vesely's study (2000:43) said:

I think English is more important than Xhosa and other African languages in South Africa. Because we learn at schools and we want to know languages like English. Because if you are a student you must know English, because English is going to help you when you want to work. If you are working in your office etc. you must know languages, especially English. English is very important.

Alexander (1989:66) observes that the language(s) used to teach particular (or all) subjects become the most important language(s) in the modern state. He further states that those languages attract parents' attention, since they drive the economy of the country and indigenous African languages lack adequate capacity to teach technical subjects such as mathematics and science; this, despite the fact that children learn best in their mother tongue in the early years of schooling. With regard to language policy for schools in Namibia, the study of Brian Harlech-Jones (1990:216) states that participants of that study indicated that they favoured their second language (English or Afrikaans) as the medium of instruction from the first school year, with some favouring the initial dual use of both the second language and the mother tongue. Kamwangamalu (2001, cited in Braam, 2004:9) says that possibly they prefer their children to be taught through other languages than their mother tongue.

In some cases, people see African languages as primitive, and think that it delays children's language development (Heugh, 2000:15). NERA (2000:30) reports that in Namibia, national

(African) languages are widely felt to stand for poverty, backwardness, underdevelopment, second-class education and traditionalism. Furthermore, Heugh (2000) and Rabugumya (1989:2) observe that many parents think that English is the only language in education that can deliver quality teaching and learning. Harlech-Jones (1990:169) found that it was evident, during the interviews he conducted with school principals, that half of those interviewed favoured the retention of the exciting practice of switching to the language of wider communication as the medium of instruction in Standard Two. The consequences of this switching are that English is being developed and the mother tongues are being threatened.

Another reason for preferring English is prestige. People believe that one must have a good command of English to be able to handle a science laboratory, but they forget that an English native-speaker who lacks scientific knowledge would also fail to handle a science laboratory. Heugh (2000) learnt that many parents in South Africa want a 'short cut' for their children to master English, and send them to English-medium schools for that reason.

Another claim is that there are no materials or sufficient, relevant teaching and learning materials in schools (Munganda cited in Beckett (ed.), 2000:73). One reason is that people think that mother tongue education delays or interfere with children's acquisition of a second language (usually English). Many people see English as the only language that can provide quality education, and they do not consider the other effects it may have on teaching and learning in schools. These perceptions are common in many African countries, including Namibia. Legère(1996, cited in NERA, 2000:60) sheds light on what Namaseb and Tjoutuku reported on their experiences of the negative attitudes of teachers and communities towards African languages. Also see Turker (1996, cited in NERA, 2000:42) for other reasons.

Mutumba (1999:9), quoted in the report on language policy research (NERA 2000:46), says:

Some countries, such as Namibia, exhibit clear discrepancies... between policy statements and their actual implementation process... Although the language policy ideally supports mother tongue education, because of inadequate resources, such as teachers and textbooks, it is difficult... to implement mother tongue instruction in Grade 1-3.

This is coupled with...the reluctance of the elite group' to promote indigenous languages...The shortage of qualified teachers is a serious threat towards the successful realisation of the language policy goals.

It is clear that the implementation of mother-tongue learning is hampered by many factors, such as resources (human as well as physical), and community members who disregard their own mother tongue and put a foreign language above their indigenous language. This is the position throughout Namibia, and the Kavango educational region is no exception. A footnote in NERA (2000:8) states that

The view that "anyone who can speak a language can teach successfully via that language" is strongly rejected by Turker (1996:9), who calls it a "myth... relatively firmly entrenched in the minds of many parents, educators and policy makers." Strangely enough, this myth is mainly found in Third World countries. In Europe or in the United States nobody would expect a mother tongue speaker to do the job as a language teacher without relevant formal training.

Again, in some cases teaching in a mother tongue is regarded as a simple job that any teacher could do.

Another study, by Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, points out that a Kenyan author, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, states that choosing as the language of instruction an indigenous language – the language people speak, are familiar with and which belongs to their cultural heritage – would redistribute power from the privileged few to the masses (Brock-Utne *et al*, 2003:81).

### **2.5.3 Linguistic *transfer***

Many people believe that one can translate a message from one language into another language as long as one can speak both languages. Many parents think that teachers can transfer subject content from one language into another with ease. Linguists, for example Catford, (cited in Halliday 1965:22), shed light on the types of translations that exist; one is called restricted translation: translation from one language to another is only possible on the phonological level, where the translator considers the grammar (syntax aspect) of the target language and leaves out meanings of words (semantics) issues in the translation.

Furthermore, it emphasises that it is important to note that though this kind of translation is possible, there can be no analogous ‘contextual’ translation. It might happen that when the teacher considers only the aspect in his or her translation, other aspects (such as semantics and syntax) are left out. When a teacher takes only the one aspect, i.e. how the particular language’s sentence is structured, he or she might leave out the subject content that needs to be shared with learners. This problem makes the teacher’s task even more complicated: it is impossible to translate all the necessary terms and concepts from the language in which the teacher was trained (English) into the mother tongue which they use as the medium of instruction in their teaching. It may lead teachers to omit the necessary concepts and competencies that are required in their teaching, and as a result of that poor teaching, learners might easily miss some necessary information they need to know.

Yahya-Othman (in Rubagumya, 1989:45-46) states that when pupils receive education in a language which they do not use except in the classroom, their linguistic deficiencies might hamper their thinking, their critical observations, their questioning of ideas and facts, and their interpretation of what is communicated to them. If a person (whether teacher or learner) is not able to think critically, or not able to ask constructive questions about what is being deliberated in class, success in schooling is limited. This can happen because the person lacks terms or experience in the target language that he or she can use to make his or her point or suggestions about what is being discussed. It can happen that a person knows the grammar of a particular language, but hardly knows how to use that language. William Hank states that “to an extent a language can be learned without being lived” (Gee, 1999:8).

## **2.6. CLAIMS FOR MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION**

Skutnabb-Kangas, a linguist, states that mother-tongue speech would of course have been the easier way for most of the children in the examples in his study to express themselves, or to express joy (2000:334). Heugh (2000:15), Senkoro (in Brock-Utne *et al*, 2004:50) and Bloch (2002) acknowledge that early-age schooling through the mother tongue benefits children and allows for effective teaching in schools. In addition, Senkoro (in Brock-Utne *et al*, 2004:50) adds that the mother-tongue medium of instruction is better (for both teachers and learners) for clear communication and clear expression in classrooms. Senkoro recommends mother tongue education to prevent ‘safe talk’, in which teachers or learners hide behind simple but irrelevant talk when they experience difficulties with their language proficiency in the

medium of instruction used in the classroom. Safe talk can prevent teachers from rendering effective teaching. In safe talk, each stakeholder (teacher or learner) may formulate simple questions that might lead to superficial answers. For example:

*Question 1. What is Peter doing? Answer: Peter is writing.*

*Question 2. Peter is writing with what? Answer: Peter is writing with a pen.*

*Question 3. Peter is writing with a pen on what? Answer: Peter is writing with a pen on a piece of paper.*

To avoid the above scenario, Senkoro (in Brock-Utne et al, 2004:50) reminds us that it is the right of teachers to teach and learners to be taught in their mother tongue (the language they fully understand) for better understanding of what is being taught, in order for them to participate in classroom discussions. It would seem that student teachers trained in a foreign language who are expected to teach in their mother tongue miss some valuable concepts that they should acquire during training. The reality is that the language structure of English is very different from the structure of any of the Namibian languages; and in most Namibian communities, English is used only in schools, and seldom in other domains such as at home. Another pedagogical reason for the ineffectiveness of teaching in schools is the differences in print between Namibian languages and English (NERA, 2000:59). There are much fewer print materials in indigenous languages compared to English materials in most schools in Namibia.

## **2.7 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SITUATION FOR TEACHER EDUCATION**

Each of the points made regarding mother tongue education in Namibia has its own significance. For example, what is the effect created by the change from one medium of instruction to another? Are teachers who were trained in other languages than their first language coping with teaching in their mother tongue? Or are there challenges to teaching effectively, so that their learners receive the quality teaching they require? If communities want to take mother tongue education seriously in every school in Kavango, are there enough relevant teaching and learning materials, as well as qualified staff who are competent and fluent in the mother tongue of each school community? Where is the motivation and the examples that will show the Kavango communities that teaching through an indigenous language is better than teaching through a foreign language?

Yet the language policy for schools in Namibia is not convincing regarding the effectiveness of teaching and learning when teachers are trained in English and expected to deliver their teaching in communities where only mother tongue is used in day-to-day social practice.

The concerns remain: Do parents in the Kavango educational region (including teachers and educators, who are also learners themselves) know how many of the children in the schools suffer from the pedagogical problems or implications of using a foreign language as the medium of instruction? How many trained teachers are able to use their own initiative, with knowledge gained through English, to teach 'outside the box' prescribed by the Ministry? Due to the lack of clarity regarding these concerns, I am confident that the research question to this study is valid.

To conclude this chapter: the literature review done in this study has shown the value of mother-tongue education in African education, and has also indicated the implications of its use in educational institutions. The following chapter (Research Methodology) describes the methods used to collect data for this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter clarifies the research methodology and procedures followed in a study exploring how the language policy for schools in Namibia benefits student teachers, teachers and learners in the classroom context, specifically in the Kavango educational region. This was an advocacy project, as it promoted the use of local, indigenous languages in schools; at the same time, it was a learning experience for the researcher, making it a participatory research project as well.

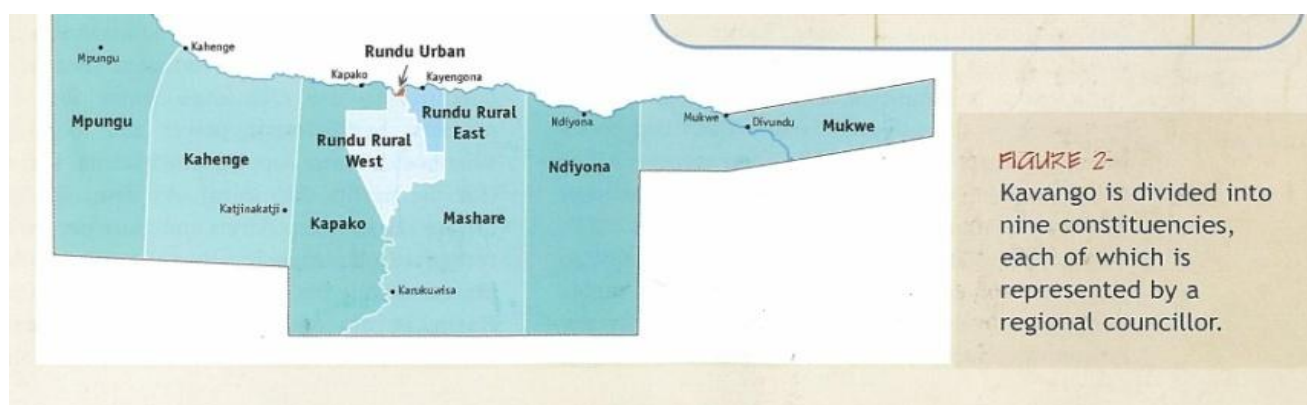
### **3.2. RESEARCH SETTING**

The setting for the study was the Kavango educational region in Namibia. The investigation was carried out in three different educational institutions, namely the Rundu Regional Office, one selected school (Ruu-Rumwe Primary School) and a teacher-training institution (the former Rundu College of Education, now the Rundu Campus of the University of Namibia).

The Kavango educational region is divided into nine political constituencies, each with a Circuit office headed by an Inspector of Education. Among other duties, the Inspector oversees educational matters for 25-30 schools within the Circuit, and reports to the regional office. The school selected for this study is one of 24 schools operating under the Rundu Circuit office in the Kapako constituency. (Ruu-Rumwe Primary) The target School was chosen for the following reasons: it is a semi-rural school 15km west of Rundu, and thus was accessible by taxi. The school currently accommodates 475 learners from grades one to seven, in the hands of 14 teachers. With a few exceptions (mostly considered to be rural), rural schools in the Kavango educational region accommodate from 40 to 600 learners per school. Therefore, with 475 learners, and located in a semi-rural area, the selected school is reasonably representative of primary schools in the region.



Fig. 1. The nine constituencies of the Kavango political region.



(Adapted from Mandelson & Obeid, 2003: 19)

Advisory teachers who participated in this research were based at the Regional Office in Rundu, allowing the researcher enough time to distribute and collect questionnaires.

The Rundu Campus of the University of Namibia is the only institution in the Kavango educational region to offer teacher training on a full-time basis. It is situated in the Rundu Rural East constituency, and was thus also not difficult to reach by taxi for the fieldwork component of the investigation.

### 3.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The investigation was carried out in the form of a case study through qualitative research adopting the interpretative paradigm. Thus, the findings of the study are presented in narrative form. The case study format allowed the researcher to interact with various people at grassroots level and gain increased understanding of the situation. By interacting with the participants rather than simply presenting them with abstract theories, the researcher enabled them to understand the purpose of the investigation (Cohen et al, 2000: 181). This methodology allowed the researcher to witness the actual events of the teaching process in the classroom – how language is applied, and the interaction between student teachers and educators, and teachers and learners. The case study approach was considered valid for this investigation. Strauss and Corbin (1990) (in Hoepfl, 1997: 48) define qualitative research as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” Creswell (2003) sees interpretive methodology to be suitable for qualitative research. He further explains that when a qualitative approach is used, study designs are

based on broad philosophical assumptions, possible frameworks, problems and questions (Creswell, 2003: 34).

This implies that the researcher ‘reads participants’ minds’ (through their views and opinions) on the phenomena being investigated; the researcher in this study also took participants’ environment and position, be teacher educators, teachers, School board members, Advisory teachers and learners, into consideration.

Cohen et al (2000: 22) point out that the main idea of the interpretative paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. This underlines how vital it is for the researcher to note that each individual participant views and understands the world differently, based on various life discourses in which each is involved that can influence individuals to act or to behave in different ways. In the interpretative paradigm, a researcher uses the views and opinions of participants to create their own meaning, taking into consideration internal and external factors causing participants to act or understand things in the way they do. In this study, the researcher’s intention was to extract meaning from what came from participants, rather than bending participants’ statements to satisfy the hypotheses of the study. With this in mind, therefore, the researcher interpreted the data by developing descriptions of each participant’s responses in order to interpret and understand the impact of the language policy for schools in Namibia on teaching and learning in the target school.

Another reason for applying the qualitative and interpretative approach to this investigation was that it allowed the researcher to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. In addition, the interpretative paradigm was seen as appropriate because it allows the researcher to expand on what is already known but which might be difficult to interpret quantitatively, as shown by some of the findings in chapter five. These show how different languages were applied in teaching concepts at teacher training and at lower primary phase in the target school.

### **3.4. METHODS**

Cohen, et al (2000: 44) state: “methods’ means that range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which is to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanations and prediction. This implies that the researcher should use certain strategies to collect data that can be interpreted so as to provide evidence for the particular investigation. Therefore, various methods and research instruments were necessary for this investigation,

including a review of relevant literature, interviews, questionnaires, classroom observations and focus group discussions/group interweaving.

Each instrument was carefully selected to provide the study with information related to language policy for schools in Namibia and the way languages are applied in the classroom context. However, other aspects that affect the effectiveness of the teaching and learning encountered during the fieldwork were also taken into consideration as supplementary information.

### ***3.4.1 Literature review***

For the researcher in this study, the literature review allowed the views and perceptions of various participants in the study to be informed by what previous researchers found regarding the implementation and impact of language policy on teaching and learning in Namibia and elsewhere. Furthermore, previous studies motivated and encouraged the researcher in this study to explore *why* participants differ in their views and perceptions with regards to language policy for schools in Namibia. Coleman's study in Cohen et al (2003: 184) highlighted that there are discrepancies between the points of view of different research participants, acknowledging the complexity and embeddedness of social truths. In reviewing the literature for this study, the researcher developed other concerns and questions that needed to be explored further regarding applied language(s) in education in Africa, and in Namibia in particular.

In addition, the works of experienced scholars and linguists such as Skutnabb-Kangas, Alexander (1989), Harlech-Jones (1990), Pütz (1995) and Brock-Utne et al (2003) were influential with respect to the theoretical framework for this investigation. Regarding the language policy for schools in Namibia, the study of Brian Harlech-Jones (1990: 216) points out that participants in that study indicated that they favour a second language (English or Afrikaans) as a medium of instruction from the first school year, with some favouring the initial dual use of both a second language and the mother tongue. Zubeida Desai's case study (2003) on mother tongue education shed light on the Pan South African Language Board's decision advising the education department that African learners are not able to access knowledge equitably. The board recommended that learners in Khayelitsha (the African-language-speaking community concerned) be taught in their mother tongue, and also that learners be exposed to quality English-language lessons, taught by teachers who are proficient

in English (Brock-Utne et al, 2003: 62). Also see Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir in Brock-Utne et al (2003).

Pütz (1995: 246) summarises previous studies to acknowledge Schmied (1991a: 163), and Lewis (1981) quoted in Baker (1992: 9) who state:

Any policy for language, especially in the system of education, has to take account of the attitude of those likely to be affected. In the long run, no policy will succeed which does not do one of the three things: conform to the expressed attitudes of those involved; persuade those who express negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy; or seek to remove the causes of the disagreement. In any case knowledge about attitudes is fundamental to the formulation of a policy as well as to success in its implementation.(Also See Alexander (1989) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2002), alluded earlier.

### **3.4.2 Interviews**

Since an interview is a face-to-face conversation that takes place between two people, and an interviewer is in a position to pose questions to the interviewee, the one who is providing answers (Cohen et al, 2000: 269), this sort of conversation carries many aspects that can affect the interviewer or the interviewee during the session. Aspects such as curiosity to learn the unknown from participants and mutual trust between the researcher and the participants was seen as important in this study. However, participants might not tell everything to the researcher during the investigation. Therefore, in this research, good relationships were established between the researcher and the participants, and the objectives of the study were made clear, to make the participants feel at ease and to build trust between the parties. Another aspect considered and applied was that the researcher showed eagerness to learn from participants how each participant perceived the matter under investigation. During classroom observations the researcher sat passively, and did not intervene in the teaching conducted, to allow the teachers or teacher educators to perform their normal teaching duties without any disturbance. However, when a person is being observed, the situation or atmosphere causes different actions and behaviour from that person. These may hide what is actually taking place at that moment, and may not reveal how it would happen in a normal, day-to-day situation (Cohen et al 2000: 268). Though interviews are considered to have some bias as a research instrument, they were considered an appropriate tool in this qualitative research, for the following reasons: firstly, because interviews allow the researcher to access what is in the participant's head during face-to-face interaction. In this study, the face-to-face interaction

with the participants allowed the researcher to deepen her understanding of what was already known, and also learn new aspects of how participants could identify the impact of language policy on teaching and learning in their school community. Also, they allowed the researcher to learn how participants in this study behave, and the reasons behind their actions.

In this investigation, interviewees were informed in advance about the topic being explored. This was communicated to them in a timely manner to allow them to prepare, and also to prompt questions or follow up on questions – necessary from both sides. With participants' permission, interviews were recorded for reference and analysis after the completion of the fieldwork.

The research used semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions which allowed respondents to respond freely with what they knew or what they thought the answer might be. Open-ended questions were emphasised in this study so as not to lead participants to provide the answers that the researcher wanted, or to satisfy the assumptions or hypothesis of the investigation. Semi-structured interviews are considered (by Patton (1990) in Hoepfl (1997: 52) to be appropriate instruments for collecting data for qualitative research.

In this study, interviews were conducted with two educators in teacher education and three lower primary teachers in the selected school. Each category of research group participants answered slightly different interview questionnaires (see Appendices I, J,K,L,M). These differences were tailored to fit each participant's role in education and his or her perception of the existing language policy for schools in Namibia. Another consideration was the position of each participant at the research sites during the period of the study. Teacher-educators were asked to share their experience in teaching student-teachers from various backgrounds using English as the medium of instruction, the student-teachers were observed how they respond to give their input during training sessions in the classroom situation. Lower Primary teachers were questioned on what they experience in the field when doing teaching practice in schools (how they transfer knowledge gained through English into their mother tongue). They were also asked to share their experiences in teaching through a mother tongue, as prescribed by the existing language policy, though they were trained with English as the medium of instruction.

Furthermore, each interview included questions designed to encourage participants to share their knowledge and understanding of language policy.

### **3.4.3 Questionnaires**

The purpose of most of the questionnaires questions used in this study was also to elicit information communicated orally. Only one category of participants (i.e. the three advisory teachers) was required to answer questionnaires in writing. They are education officials responsible for monitoring teaching in the Lower Primary phase in schools in the Kavango region. They were asked to share how they view the contradiction found in the language policy for schools in Namibia: English is prescribed as the medium for teacher education, and at the same time mother tongue education is recommended for teaching the Lower Primary phase. The concern of this study was: how do graduates from this policy render effective teaching at Lower Primary phase schools, since most communities in the rural areas hardly use English in their day-to-day activities?

Questionnaires were considered to be an appropriate instrument for extracting information from advisory teachers for the following reasons: one, they save time – advisory teachers have a tight work schedule that would not have allowed them to do face-to-face interviews with the researcher during the fieldwork period. Two, they could complete the questionnaires in the researcher's absence and submit them later, while the researcher was busy with other participants in other institutions.

Questionnaires as a research instrument in this study helped the researcher to finish the fieldwork in the time allowed on the research site. However, the limitations of questionnaires were taken into account.

The questionnaires consisted of various structured questions, but also some open-ended questions, to allow participants to give their views in their own words. Through these the researcher learnt what participants considered to be the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities to be found in the existing language policy for schools in Namibia. Wilson and McLean (1994) and Oppenheim (1992) cited in Cohen et al (2000: 248) also emphasised the significance of open-ended questions. However, the limitations of questionnaires (leading terms, irritating questions and ambiguity) were also taken into consideration when the questionnaires were developed.

#### **3.4.4. Classroom observations**

Another research instrument in this study was classroom observation. Classroom observations were conducted at the two different sites: the teacher-training institution at the Rundu Campus of the University of Namibia, and in the selected school (Ruu-Rumwe Primary School). The time allocated was four periods of two hours each in teacher training classrooms, for year one and year two level. These classes were conducted by two different teacher educators. Eighteen periods of 40 minutes each (six lessons in each of Grades One to Three) were observed in the Lower Primary phase classrooms in the target school. The aim of these observations was to learn how different mediums of instruction are applied in the classroom situation, and how each affects effective teaching and learning among participants (teachers and learners). In this way the researcher could conceptualise the interaction between teacher-educators and student-teachers taught through the medium of English, and the interaction between teachers and learners taught through the medium of their mother tongue in the Lower Primary classroom situation.

Each class (and teacher) was observed for a day, to cover all the periods on the timetable for a particular class. This was done so as not to exclude any subject offered in the Lower Primary phase curriculum for each grade, since the research objective was to examine effective teaching and learning (through the mother-tongue medium of instruction) as a whole, as well as to measure the level of student-teacher and learner participation and to evaluate the work produced at the different educational institutions. In this case study, the researcher went into classrooms to act as a participant and at the same time as an observer.

The researcher was seen as a participant because of her presence in the class; and as an observer because she did not participate in the interaction activities that took place.

In addition, these classroom observations (through class work and homework given to learners) provided the researcher with a good opportunity to explore the work of the learners and measure their understanding of what is being taught in classrooms, given the physical environment, the participants' settings, the interactional setting and the programme setting. In this study, the researcher had the agenda of investigating issues regarding language policy for schools in Namibia in the data collection process; thus, the observations were required to be semi-structured (Patton, 1990: 202; in Cohen et al, 2000: 305).

### ***3.4.5. Focus group discussions and group interviewing***

Research reveals that an advantage of focus group discussions is that in bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a given theme or topic, the interaction of the group leads to data and outcomes (Morgan, 1988: 9; cited in Cohen et al, 2000: 288). Furthermore, focus group discussions save time, as they provide a large amount of information in a short time. In this case they were helpful in collecting sufficient data for the study because the only time available was during holidays. Watts and Ebbutt (1987) cited in (Cohen et al, 2000: 287) shed light on other advantages of using group interviewing: to allow a group of people who have been working together for some time or for a common purpose to interact, where it is seen as important that everyone concerned is aware of what others in the group are saying. Group interviewing in this study also helped the researcher to succeed in getting small children (learners) to talk to the researcher, an unfamiliar person. Group interviewing as method for collecting data was also stressed by other studies to be appropriate to get small children talk to other people unfamiliar to them (Cohen et al, 2000: 287).

Therefore, two different focus group discussions were conducted for this study: one group of School Board members (consisting of parents) and one group consisting of grade three learners. These discussions were conducted in the mother tongue. The two categories were suggested for the following reasons: This instrument was considered suitable for the suggested groups because it was expected that it would be easier to get parents to talk or deliberate on issues when a researcher is leading the discussion and prompting questions regarding why an issue is viewed in one way and not another. Also, children might have been afraid to speak to an unfamiliar person in one-to-one interviews; putting questions in the form of a discussion was more likely to be successful. Therefore, the use of focus group discussions in this study was seen as a valuable approach, eliciting information from participants who might not have been open to speaking freely in individual interviews. On the other hand, focus group discussions and group interviewing are not without their drawbacks; these are discussed under section 3.6.

## **3.5. RESEARCH SAMPLE**

The criteria used to select the participants for this study were the roles that individual participants play in their community and in education generally at the research site. Participants were carefully selected from five different groups of education stakeholders:



teacher-educators from the University of Namibia at Rundu Campus, advisory teachers from the Rundu regional office, teachers and learners at lower primary phase and School Board members in the selected school.

Three advisory teachers (each representing one indigenous language used in schools in the region) completed questionnaires. Five School Board members and two Grade Three learners in the selected school participated in the focus group discussions and group interviewing. Two teacher-educators for the Lower Primary phase from the Rundu College of Education and three Lower Primary teachers in the selected school took part in interviews. Gender balance was an important aspect considered in preventing bias in the study, but as some positions were occupied by the same gender, ultimately there were more female than male participants in the study. Altogether, five males and ten females participated in the investigation including learners even though learners could not be included in table 1 for various reason. It was considered important to get perceptions from different points of view – but at the end of the day, each group of participants is striving for the same goal: to provide quality education to the children of the Kavango region.

In this context, the researcher suggested to the participants in this study that in order to prepare and produce good products in education, education stakeholders should have the following concerns in mind:

- (a) What quality of education is taking place in their schools?
- (b) What language is the medium of instruction being used in their school community in order for the teaching to be clear enough to the recipients (the children) that they are able to apply the knowledge and skills gained through their schooling in their daily activities or social practice?
- (c) Which strategies and methodologies are needed for teaching learners, taking consideration of each individual school community environment?

### **3.6 ETHICS, CONFIDENTIALITY AND GAINING ACCESS**

#### **3.6.1 Ethics**

Maintaining communication with the institutions and participants in writing or via telephone was essential procedure in conducting this research. Follow-up messages and reminders

needed to be sent one or two days prior to study activities to ensure that all participants were available for the study. The detailed programme for the interviews and other planned activities was attached to the letters and sent to them in a timely manner. Parents and guardians needed to sign the ethics forms explained in their mother tongue on the content of the form and it were signed in advance to indicate that they would allow their children to participate in the study. Therefore, the academic and ethical research conventions compulsory at the University of Cape Town were taken into account.

In the study, procedures and other information were sent to heads of institutions, seeking permission to carry out the study at those institutions through interviews, questionnaires, discussions and observations. Parents or guardians of grade three learners under the age of eighteen signed consent forms permitting their children to take part in the investigation (see Appendix H).

### ***3.6.2 Confidentiality***

Participants were informed that the outcomes of the study would be handled with care and in confidence. Names of participants would not be revealed – participants were given substitute names (numbers) for their own protection. The researcher was still able to identify individual participants in order to extract particular details from the discussion records.

### ***3.6.3 Gaining Access***

Lofland and Lofland (1984: 25; in Hoepfl, 1997: 54) pointed out that naturalistic researchers ask participants to “grant access to their lives, their minds (and) their emotion.” Their statement indicated to this researcher what needed to be considered in performing this research. It was important to interact with the institutions and people involved in order to learn and understand the situation that needed to be explored, and for access to be granted to the institution and the participants. This reminded the researcher that only proper and clear arrangements could lead the study to be fruitful. Therefore, in this study, written and verbal communication was vital for arranging times for interviews and discussions (see Appendices B, C, D, E, F, and G). In addition, the topics for discussion and the aim of the study were communicated in advance to the institutions and participants involved, to avoid fears and barriers building up in the minds of participants. In addition, participants in this study were asked their permission for the researcher to use cameras and tape recorders, and the reasons for using such equipment were explained fully.

### **3.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Kitwood (1977) sheds light on situations in doing research, pointing out that the conception of the interview is that of a transaction which inevitably has bias that must be recognised and controlled. I was arguing for mother tongue education in teacher education as well as the teaching at the Lower primary phase in the selected school in Kavango educational region in this study. My views might seem one sided in this regard. Again, due to the fact that I serve the Ministry of Education as an Inspector of Education to supervise teachers in schools, my position could be other limitations that might put participants not being open to reveal the reality in their teaching.

Secondly, the number of participants for the study was small. The size of the sample might not fully reflect the views of the entire affected school community but it was considered to be appropriate for a minor dissertation, since the aim was to investigate the language situation in one school only.

Again, participants in this study come from different background (such as learners, teachers, school board members, advisory teachers and teacher educators) Different backgrounds of individual participants, their age and level of their education could be other limitations in exploring to understand issues regarding language policy for schools in Namibia. Also their literacy levels differ and might not fully apply to the impact of language in the teaching and learning as it would have been if they had been more literate. These points limited the generalisation of the outcomes and the conclusion of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present the data obtained by the four data collection methods. Interviews, focus group discussions/focus group interviewing, classroom observations and questionnaires were the research instruments used to examine the impact of the difference in medium of instruction for teacher education, on one hand, and lower primary teaching, on the other; with specific reference to the Kavango educational region in Namibia.

The presentation shows direct responses of participants to the questions listed in in Appendix I-L.

#### Appendix .I. Questions to Teacher educators

1. Introduction.
2. **Are you pleased or not pleased to teach the Phase you are assigned for? Give reason to support your answer.**

##### **Teacher Educator 1.**

Yes, I'm pleased: Because I'm qualified in this field, also I like to deal with small children.

**Teacher Educator 2.** Mhn, yes, I do. This is my field of study.

3. **The medium of instruction for teacher training differs with the medium of instruction used at the lower primary phase in schools, what is your comment on this differences in medium of instruction?**

##### **Teacher Educator 1.**

The medium of instruction in teacher education is English, but schools use mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the Lower Primary Phase. Language becomes a barrier because some lecturers do not have the language of the student teachers. Sometimes these lectures train and forget to explain the concepts in the students' mother tongue. It ends up that students finish their training and start teaching in schools without understanding.

##### **Teacher Educator 2.**

My comment is that since English is the language of teaching during the training, student teachers need to work hard on their English vocabularies as well as their mother tongue that they need to use in the schools.

**4. Being a teacher educator at this institution, teaching student teachers with different language backgrounds through English as medium of instruction what is your experience on this matter?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

It is very difficult to accommodate them all at once, since teacher educators cannot speak all student teachers' languages. It is only better with me, because I can speak and understand different languages used in Kavango region, like Rukwangali, Rumanyo also a bit of Thimbukushu.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

In order to progress in class, I stick to the Language of teaching, but not all student teachers are comfortable.

**5. In your experience, is the language (English medium of instruction) a barrier to the understanding of the contents/vocabularies for student teachers you are training? Give example(s) to illustrate or support your answer**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

I can see English medium of instruction as a barrier, because vocabularies in English are not always easy to get in our languages. For example, relationships among the family members.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

It depend on the student teachers.

**6. The Language Policy for Schools in Namibia, states that the teaching at the Lower Primary will be in the school community mother tongue. In your view, are there any challenges or constraints in implementing this in Kavango educational region? If so, what are they?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

Some parents feel good when their child comes back from school and says one or two English words. Those parents want their children to learn English and not their mother tongue.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

Their is a mixture of feelings. Some parents want English for their children.

- 7. During training of student teachers, did you come across content or vocabularies in expression that is/are a restriction in the mother tongue (s) used in schools in Kavango educational region?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

Oh! Yes, when we teach Arts and technology, Rukwangali vocabularies like nombare, sivare, nongongo and nonzaru, which refer to materials used in weaving baskets in the Kavango tradition.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

Yes, but there is nothing I can do about it, than to stick to English and encourage student teachers to use dictionaries to search for meaning.

- 8. What strategies and motivation do you give student teachers and how do you go about addressing the shortcomings they will come across in their teaching in order to teach effectively through mother tongue at Lower primary phase?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

Always encourage them to seek help from other fellow teachers or their HOD in their schools.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

Consult others in the same school or nearby schools.

- 9. What topics or aspects in the teacher education curriculum did you notice that might give teachers problems/difficulties in trying to teach what they had been trained through English medium of instruction in their mother tongue at the Lower primary phase in their respective schools in Kavango educational region?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

As I stated earlier, topics that deal with something in our tradition.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

Topics in mathematics, like measurements and problem solving.

**10. If you will be given an opportunity to advise the Government on Language policy for Schools and Teacher Training Institutions, what could be your advise?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

I suggest to advise the Government to revisit the language policy and also revise the requirement for teacher educators to include a local language. I can see that they overlooked this and they think that if you have qualified to teach lower primary phase and also you can speak English, you can train student teachers because the medium of instruction in teacher education is English.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

My comment is on the requirement of new intakes, they must have a good pass in languages.

**11. Can you support your answer given to the question number 10?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

It is always better for the teacher educator to understand the local language to explain something that is difficult for students to understand in English.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

To help them to understand subject contents in class.

**12. Is there any strength, weakness, threat or opportunity regarding the current Language Policy for schools in Namibia you would like to share with the researcher?**

**Teacher Educator 1.**

The only thing I see as a strength and important is that grade 1-3 receive teaching in mother tongue.

**Teacher Educator 2.**

It should try to cater for everybody's language.

## APPENDIX .J. Questions to teachers

- 1. Can you introduce yourself starting with your names, years of experience in the teaching career and the grade you are teaching currently.**

**Teacher 1:** 9 years of teaching experience, I teach grade 1.

**Teacher 2:** 14 years of teaching experience, I teach grade 3.

**Teacher 3:** 11 years of teaching experience, I'm assigned to grade 2.

- 2. Are you pleased or not pleased to teach at the Lower primary Phase? Give reason (s) why or why not?**

**Teacher 1:** I'm happy here, to play with small children

**Teacher 2:** I'm okay, the school management changed me from grade 4 to grade 3 now.

**Teacher 3:** Yes, I am pleased.

- 3. Where and when did you obtain your teaching professional qualification?**

**Teacher 1:** At Rundu Teacher Resource Centre through NIED (National Institute for Educational Development), 9 years back.

**Teacher 2:** I am still continuing with my study

**Teacher 3:** At Rundu College of Education in 1999,

- 4. Can you rate your language proficiency on the following scale indicated from high to low.**

### ***4.1 English language proficiency (5,4,3,2,1).***

**Teacher 1:** (rate 2)

**Teacher 2:** (rate 2) teacher 2 added: "In English to understand, I understand, but coming to speaking, I struggling, as you can see".

**Teacher 3:** (rate 3)



#### **4.2 Mother tongue(Rukwangali) (5,4,3,2,1).**

**Teacher 1:** (rate 4)

**Teacher 2:** (rate 4)

**Teacher 3:**(rate 4)

#### **5. The medium of instruction during your teacher training differs with the medium of instruction you are using at the phase you are currently teaching , what is your comment on this difference in medium of instructions?**

**Teacher 1:**

*“Kwange ko aga masivano ga kara, morwa kapi ayi tanta kwange yuma yo ku deura varongi meraka lyosiIngilisa eli vana ku ya pira ku ya ruganesa nawa mononkondwa rongero.”* (To me this seems to be a usual complaint, because in my view it doesn’t make sense to train teachers in English, the language they cannot use in the classroom as the medium of instruction.)

**Teacher 2:**

*“Ame ku yimona asi, mitili-mitili tupu, ga kona ku papara magano goku gusa po udigu wendi. Hena eraka-eraka tupu kuvhura ku pirura”* (In my view, a teacher is a teacher; he or she needs to make a plan in order to overcome problems they come across. Also, a language is a language; it is possible to translate).

**Teacher 3:**

The difference in the two languages of instruction creates problems for teachers: sometimes they do not know how to overcome the problem they are experiencing with respect to vocabularies and concepts which are not found in one of the languages needed at a particular time.).

#### **6. Was the language (MOI) a barrier to understanding the contents/vocabularies that were taught?**

**Teacher 1:**

Pamwe eraka kureta udigu, erago yeeyi asi kuronga harade 1 hasa kapisi udigu unene. (Sometimes yes, but lucky enough grade one level of teaching is not so difficult).

**Teacher 2:**

My answer on whether language is a barrier for the understanding of what is taught is 'YES' and 'NO'. I say yes, because during training my understanding of what has been taught becomes clear with the help of teacher educators. Where I was not clear, I used to ask clarity from them to help me. This is not the same anymore when I am working on my own in school. It is difficult, because it is not easy to get someone who can explain for me.

**Teacher 3:**

Language becomes a barrier in subject such as mathematics when they are expected to do sums on measurements or weights, etc.

**7. The Language Policy for Schools in Namibia, states that the teaching at the Lower Primary will be in the school community's mother tongue. Are there any challenges or constraints in implementing this in your school? If so, what are they?**

**Teacher 1:**

Nawa, kuronga momaraka getu, udigu umwe yiruganeso ngwendi nobuke kapi da gwanena nawa-nawa (good to teach in mother tongue, but materials are not enough).

**Teacher 2:**

Just like that, here and there

**Teacher 3:**

Some learners in our school speak languages other than Rukwangali, the medium of instruction in this school.

**8. Is the expression of some content(s) or vocabularies a restriction in (Rukwangali) the mother tongue you use at Ruu-Rumwe Primary School?**

**Teacher 1:** I'm not sure.

**Teacher 2:** Difficult terms, we try to use easy language.

**Teacher 3:** There are some words one can only have in Rukwangali and not in English or vice versa.

**9. How do you go about addressing the shortcomings you encounter in order to teach effectively through mother tongue at Lower primary phase?**

**Teacher 1:** When, I don't know things, I ask my colleagues.

**Teacher 2:** In school it is difficult, but at the teacher resource centre, I ask help from my tutors.

**Teacher 3:** I find help from other teachers.

**10. What topics or aspects give teachers problems/difficulties and which are easier to teach through mother tongue at the Lower primary phase?**

**Teacher 1:**

Difficult in Mathematics but teaching language is easy, especially teaching learners different colours.

**Teacher 2:**

I am only teaching Rukwangali and environment also in Rukwangali and it is easy.

**Teacher 3:**

Doing sums on measurements, weights, length and mass, etc.

**11. If you will be given an opportunity to advise the Government on Language policy for Schools and Teacher Training Institutions, what would be your advice and why?**

**Teacher 1:**

Government must continue to prescribe teachers to teach lower primary phase in mother tongue, but Government must provide more materials in mother tongue in schools even in upper primary also.

**Teacher 2:**

Train lower primary teachers more and more.

**Teacher 3:**

Mother tongue materials must be used at the College also.

**13. What is the difference between homework and class work?**

**Teacher 1:** Homework is work learners do at home, classwork in class.

**Teacher 2:** They carry homework at home, and do class work at school

**Teacher 3:** The difference is that homework they do on their own, but classwork they do it during class/period.

**14. Is there any strength, weakness, threat or opportunity regarding the current Language Policy for schools in Namibia you would like to share with the researcher?**

**Teacher 1:** I see that they do not train us in Rukwangali at the college. This is not good.

**Teacher 2:** English is there also in Grade 1-3.

**Teacher 3:** Government should emphasise mother tongue for Lower primary phase.

## **APPENDIX. K. QUESTIONNAIRES completed by Advisory teachers**

1. Please tick the answer which you believe to be relevant:
  - (a) Language is not a barrier for effective teaching in the Lower Primary Phase.
  - (b) Language is a barrier to effective teaching at the Lower Primary Phase.
  - (c) The teaching at the Lower Primary Phase is easy because it takes place through Mother tongue medium of instruction.

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

(b):

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

(b):

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

(c)

2. **The role of the Advisory Teachers is,**
  - (a) To train teachers on teaching methods.
  - (b) To monitor teaching in schools.
  - (c) To show teachers what to teach.

**Advisory Teacher 1. (a)**

**Advisory Teacher 2. (b)**

**Advisory Teacher 3. (b)**

**3. During school visits,**

- (a) Teacher(s) teach, the Advisory Teacher observes.
- (b) Advisory Teacher teaches and the teacher(s) observe.
- (c) Both Advisory Teachers and teachers have a pre-observation meeting to agree on focus observation points.

**Advisory Teacher 1. (c)**

**Advisory Teacher 2. (c)**

**Advisory Teacher 3. (c)**

**4. How do you rate the level of language proficiency of most teachers in the Lower Primary Phase in the Kavango Educational Region on a scale from 5 to 1 with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest. Please circle a number:**

English Language (5, 4, 3, 2, 1)

Mother tongue (5, 4, 3, 2, 1)

**English:                      Advisory Teacher 1. (2)**

**Advisory Teacher 2. (1)**

**Advisory Teacher 3. (2)**

**Mother tongue: Advisory Teacher 1. (4)**

**Advisory Teacher 2. (4)**

**Advisory Teacher 3. (4)**

**5. In your experience, what topics or aspects give teachers problems/difficulties and which are easier to teach using mother tongue at the Lower Primary Phase?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Teachers find it difficult to understand the syllabi they use at Lower primary phase.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

First they struggle to understand syllabi properly, because it is written in English, therefore, even some topics become difficult for them.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

Many topics in mathematics are always difficult for teachers. Teachers know words in English but not in the mother tongue. It becomes easier for teachers when they teach other subjects like environment because it is in the mother tongue.

**6. Please explain your answer.**

**Advisory Teacher 1.** Language difficulty (Syllabi written in English).

**Advisory Teacher 3.** High level of English in syllabi.

**Advisory Teacher 3.** English is always difficult for them.

**7. Under the Language Policy for Schools in Namibia, what challenges do Advisory Teachers face in advising teachers in the Lower Primary Phase?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Teachers teaching the phase know they cannot speak English well, and we give them workshop using English.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

Many languages spoken by the learners in the same class.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

There is not enough materials in the mother tongue.

**8. The Language Policy for Schools in Namibia states that teaching at the Lower Primary will be in the school community's mother tongue. Are there any challenges or constraints in implementing this in your school? If so, what are they?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Some parents want their children to know English better and they want only English, not mother tongue.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

Some challenges are books in mother tongue are not many.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

Some teachers do not speak mother tongue of the school very well.

**9. What other problems you came across that hinder effective teaching in Lower Primary schools?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.** As mentioned earlier, some people like English more than mother tongue.

**Advisory Teacher 2.** Some schools appoint uncommitted teachers to teach lower primary

**Advisory Teacher 3.** They are many, such as lack of stationery in schools.

**10. The medium of instruction during teacher training differs with the medium of instruction used at the Lower Primary Phase. What is your comment on this difference in medium of instruction?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Teachers do not implement the content of the curriculum well because of these differences in language medium used at training institutions and in schools.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

This creates difficulties for many teachers to handle teaching at lower primary phase.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

We cannot refuse to have English during training, but Government must look into the matter of our language problems.

**11. As an Advisory Teacher, what aspect(s) have you noticed that promote effective teaching in the Lower Primary Phase?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.** Commitment of staff

**Advisory Teacher 2.** Good understanding of material in use.

**Advisory Teacher 3.** Hard work.



**12. As mentioned above, the medium of instruction in teacher education in Namibia is English, and the teaching in Lower Primary Phase is in the mother tongue. What is your experience in working with teachers who were trained in English but must teach in mother tongue?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Some teachers say that they can do better teaching of the same topic if they are given chance to do it in English.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

Some teachers when they see someone from the regional office, they speak only English with the learners but this is unnecessary.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

For new teachers I tell them to translate for learners even they teach English as a subject.

**13. With respect to language medium policy, what do you consider as strengths in the Language Policy for Schools in Namibia?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

The use of mother tongue in the lower primary phase.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

They allow us to use both languages

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

So far I can see that it is good to teach lower primary in their mother tongue.

**14. With respect to language medium policy, what are some weaknesses in the Language Policy for schools in Namibia?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Why lower primary student teachers receive training in English, we want them to be trained in the language used as medium of instruction in this phase in school.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

I am not sure.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

The change from mother tongue to English in Grade 4 while this grade is also lower primary phase.

**15. Looking at the current language medium policy for schools in Namibia, given an opportunity to advise the Government, what would you suggest that can enhance teaching and learning in the Lower Primary Phase?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

The only opportunity I can see is to change the policy a bit.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

. The policy allows parents/school board to decide the medium of instruction for their school.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

To look into the matter of language in schools

**16. What would you advise teachers in the Lower Primary Phase regarding language medium policy that can enhance teaching and learning?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Parents must choose what is best language in education for their children

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

To start first to learn to write and to read in the mother tongue.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

Government must respect mother tongue in schools.

**17. Can you motivate your answer for question 11 as to whether you are pleased or not pleased with the current language medium policy for schools in Namibia?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

My motivation is that parents must have an idea of what language can my child speak and write easily.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

A Learner will write his/her own language more easily than the language he/she cannot speak well.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

Mother tongue medium of instruction must also go up to the upper grade as medium of instruction.

**18. With respect to the current language medium policy for schools in Namibia, what comment, suggestion or opinion would you offer regarding implementation so that both teachers and learners at the Lower Primary Phase may benefit?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

Language policy must share the advantages of teaching through mother tongue.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

The Ministry to allow mother tongue, even if only in a few modules, to be used in teacher education.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

Namibian Language policy to state that at least Mother tongue modules need to be taken by student teachers during teacher education.

**19. Is there any strength, weakness, threat or opportunity regarding the current Language Policy for Schools in Namibia you would like to share with the researcher?**

**Advisory Teacher 1.**

We may ask the Government to revise the language policy.

**Advisory Teacher 2.**

To me the strengths I noticed is only the teaching of mother tongue at the lower primary phase.

**Advisory Teacher 3.**

Opportunity in the language policy is that maybe the language policy makers can still revise the policy they made.

## APPENDIX. L. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION: SCHOOLBOARD MEMBERS

Discussion will be around the medium of instruction for teacher training and the teaching in the Lower Primary Phase.

Procedure of the discussion:

Chairperson: The Researcher

Participants: Members of Schoolboard

1. (a) The chairperson gives introduction of the discussion and explains the procedure of the discussion to participants.

Article 3 of the constitution of the Republic of Namibia states that the Official Language of Namibia shall be English. Furthermore, it states that nothing contained in the constitution shall prohibit the use of any other language as a medium of instruction in private schools or in schools financed or subsidised by the State, subject to compliance with such requirements as may be imposed by law, to ensure proficiency in the official language, or for pedagogic reasons, (The constitution of the Republic of Namibia page:3). Therefore, the Government of Namibia, at independence, introduced Education For All, that emphasises that each child has a right to enter and enrol in any school(s) of her/his choice, as long as she/he fulfill the requirement of that particular school. Schools are prescribed/instructed to teach at least two languages where one needs to be mother tongue of the school community. For various reasons, young children in the lower primary phase should receive their education through the mother tongue (or a familiar language in the community). From grade 4 and upwards till the tertiary level the teaching takes place in English, Language Policy for Schools in Namibia (2003:4-5). What comments do you have on these statements?

- (a) **Individual participants are given an opportunity to give their thoughts/observation/experience/desire.**

### **School board 1.**

*“Nsene muntu ga diva kuuyunga eraka olyo, kapi ta yi mu vhuru ku lironga.”* (If a person can speak a language, it would not be difficult to teach that language). This participant thinks that anybody could teach the language that he or she speaks.

### **School board 2.**

*“vanona ngano vava tamekese tanko eraka lya vene, yipo va manguruke ku uyunga no ku diva yoyinzi meraka lyawo, konyima ntani nye va ze mosiIngilisa.”* (Children need to start with their own language, to be open to talking and to know more about their own language, before they can be introduced to English.)

### **School board 3.**

RuIngilisa, ngano hasa ru ka vapopere komeho( English will be better to help them in the future).

### **School board 4**

*“Kwange ko ame kuna hara vanona vava ronge mosiIngilisa, ipo yi va rerupe mo kuzogera nampili novantu peke wo ku tunda ko yirongo youre.”* (In my opinion, I prefer children to be taught through English, to prepare and to make it easy for them to communicate even with outsiders.)

### **School board 5**

*“Ose vanerago eyi epangero lyetu lya tu pa nonosure nonomitili. Ya, vana vetu va lironge nye va dive kuuynga SiIngilisa nawa, kapisi ngava kare hena nodomu ngwendi nyose twa lisire nongombe.”* (We are lucky, because our government provided us with schools and teachers. Yes, our children must learn so that they can speak English, and not to be stupid like us who grew up looking after cattle.)

- (b) **Open discussion continues, based on participants’ thoughts. Opportunity was give to each school board member to elaborate or to motivate his/her statement.**

### **School board 1.**

Murongi, morwa kuzuva ruIngilisa, makura ga kona kugusa nkeyi meraka limwe a tware meraka peke. (The teacher understands English, and she/he must take something from one language and put it in another language).

### **School board 2.**

Nsene munona ga diva nawa kuuyunga meraka lyamwene, ta yi mu rerupa hena kudiva eraka peke ana ku gwanekera nalyo(When a child knows his/her own language very well, it makes it easier for him/her to know another language s/he might come across.

### **School board 3.**

Morwa RuIngilisa ku paparesa ko yirugana (Because one can look for a job with English).

### **School board 4.**

Eyi na uyungire ngoso, morwa, morukwangali kapi na na va li zuva novantu peke-peke nsene tava va dingura posure wokoure, ntudi moRuIngilisa (Why I said that is because through Rukwangali they would not understand one another with other people (outsiders) when they visit their school, except through English).

### **School board 5.**

Morwa sure yizo azi ninkisa va dive kuuyunga RuIngilisa (Because school makes them to know to speak English).

- (c) **Last step is that the chairperson of the discussion asks any volunteer among the participants to sum up the thoughts from the discussion.**

**Schoolboard 2**, took the floor and said the following: *Nampili moomu vana kuyi uyunga vakwetu asi, vanona pontambo ezi zepevhu vavaronge moruIngilisa, ame ko tuna lisingi, ame ngano megano lyange vavaronge meraka lyavene. Na hena varongi vawo ngano ku va pako noyiruganeso yimwe momaraka gavene vazuve ko nawa yirongwa yawo medeuro* ( Even-though my fellows wish learners at the Lower primary phase to be taught through English, I differ from them, since my wish is to teach them in their vernacular. Also their teachers are supposed to be given some materials in their mother tongue during their training for better understanding).

## **APPENDIX. M: Focus Group Discussion: Grade 3 Learners.**

The aim of this discussion is to find how they view and understand the language policy at the lower primary phase. Due to the age level of the participants (grade 3), the discussion will be led through the questions below. Participants get an opportunity to give their views on the following questions and follow up questions come in where the researcher needs any further information.

**1. Can you tell us what your names are, how old you are, where do you live, and with whom do you stay?**

**Learner 1.** My name is X. I'm 11 yrs old. I live with my Aunty in Sikondo.

**Learner 2.** I am XX. 10 yrs old. I live in Ruu-Rumwe with my grandmother.

**2. Why do you think you come to school?**

**Learner 1.** I come to school to learn

**Learner 2.** To learn.

**3. What do you want to be in the future and why?**

**Learner 1.** A doctor or a policeman

**Learner 2.** A teacher

**4. At your home(s) how many members of your family can read and write?**

**Learner 1.** One: my cousin.

**Learner 2.** My sister.

**5. Which language can the mentioned family members read and write?**

**Learner 1.** Rukwangali and English

**Learner 2.** Rukwangali

**6. At home who helps you with your homework?**

**Learner 1.** Nobody.

**Learner 2.** Sometimes my sister.

**7. Do you enjoy story telling? Who tells stories at your home and in which language?**

**Learner 1.** Yes! My cousin! Me also. In Rukwangali or in our language.

**Learner 2.** Yes! My grandmother, in Rukwangali.

**8. Is story telling important or not important and why you think so?**

**Learner 1. Important.**

**Learner 2.....**

**9. Do you also share these stories with other children in your class? In which language do you retell the stories you heard at home?**

**Learner 1. Yes. In Rukwangali**

**Learner 2. Yes. In Rukwangali**

**10. Why are you telling these stories in the language you mentioned and why not in another language?**

**Learner 1. English difficult words.**

**Learner 2. Nothing!**

**11. When the Namibian Government prescribes Lower Primary Education to take place in mother tongue, does this make it easier or difficult for you to understand what is being taught by teachers?**

**Learner 1. Yes!**

**Learner 2. Rukwangali yes, but I like English and Mathematics**

**12. Why do you say so?**

**Learner 1. When I tell a story, I don't know animals in English.**

**Learner 2.:** *RuIngilisa, ntani nomuvaru hasa,mulyo.(If the story is in English it is better and mathematics is important).*

**13. When you are given homework by teachers and the instructions are in a language other than your mother tongue, do you understand fully what is expected of you?**

**Learner 1. Teacher speaks Rukwangali**

**Learner 2. He speaks Rukwangali**



**14. Is the homework feedback given in writing or orally? Which one do you prefer and why?**

**Learner 1.** Teacher write, it is okay

**Learner 2.** I write homework.

**15. In which language do you have difficulties and struggle to understand questions or instructions?**

**Learner 1.** English is difficult.

**Learner 2.** Difficult is English, but good.

**16. Based on your answer to the previous question, in which language do you think these subjects should be taught for you to understand the content better?**

**Learner 1.** Rukwangali.

**Learner 2.** Rukwangali.

**17. If your parents ask you to choose any school in Windhoek to attend to complete your secondary education, which one you will choose?**

(a) School that uses ruKwangali as medium of instruction.

(b) School that uses English as medium of instruction.

( c ) School that uses both English and Rukwangali.

**Learner 1.** I take (C.)

**Learner 2.** ( B).

**18. Why do you suggest that school?**

**Learner 1.** To learn also English.

**Learner 2.** *“ame Rukwangali runa seta. Na hara ko nye ruIngilisa, ntani nomuvaru.”*  
(To me, Rukwangali is boring. What I want now is English and Mathematics.)

**19. What language you use to communicate with**

*(a). Your parents at home?*

**Learner 1.** In Rukwangali, sometimes in our language.

**Learner 2.** Rukwangali

*(b). Your teachers in the class?*

**Learner 1.** Rukwangali

**Learner 2.** Rukwangali

*(c). Your friends during break time at school?*

**Learner 1.** Rukwangali

**Learner 2.** Rukwangali.

**20. When teachers communicate with one another during breaks at school which language do they use?**

**Learner 1.** Rukwangali, also mhhh...

**Learner 2.** Rukwangali, in class English

**21. When teachers teach you in class, which materials, media, apparatus do they use to help you to understand the teaching better?**

**Learner 1.** Books, pictures

**Learner 2.** Posters.

**22. What other additional idea, opinion, and observation do you have to share that might hinder you from learning easier and better?**

**Learner 1.** Mhnn...nothing

**Learner 2.** Nothing!

**23. What other additional idea, opinion, and observation you have to share that might help you to learn easier and better?**

**Learner 1. Ayeee (means No)**

**Learner 2. ....**

## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

This section is dealt with in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER FIVE: SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I summarise the findings of the study obtained through the four research methods used, namely, interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and focus group interviewing as well as classroom observations. This chapter discusses and interprets the summarised findings under the following themes 1) *Language profiles, education, qualification and teaching experience*, 2) *Language attitudes*, 3) *Meta-linguistic knowledge* and 4) *Participants' overall understanding of language policy matters*. Under each main theme, I discuss and interpret the data collected against the background of the literature on this subject. I have drawn on and integrated relevant findings of previous researchers on the same subjects.

### 5.2 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.2.1. Participant profiles.

Table 2. Participant qualifications, experience and languages.

No	Participant	Medium of instruction when schooling	Professional qualification	Teaching Experience	Home language(s)
1.	Teacher 1	Rukwangali, Afrikaans and English	Teaching diploma	9 years.	Rukwangali
2.	Teacher 2	Rukwangali, Afrikaans, and English	Not yet obtained	14 years.	Rukwangali
3.	Teacher 3	Rukwangali, Afrikaans, and English	Postgraduate diploma.	11 years.	Rukwangali
4.	Advisory T1	Rukwangali and Afrikaans	Teaching diploma	28 years.	Rukwangali
5.	Advisory T2	Rumanyo, Afrikaans and English	Teaching diploma	15 years.	Rumanyo
6.	Advisory T3	Thimbukushu and Afrikaans	Teaching diploma	26 years	Thimbukushu
7.	Teacher ed. 1	Rukwangali and Afrikaans	Degree	11 years.	Rukwangali
8.	Teacher ed. 2	Afrikaans.	Postgraduate diploma	28 years.	Afrikaans
9.	S. Board 1	Rukwangali and Afrikaans	Junior. Secondary Education.	Not applicable	Rukwangali
10.	S. Board 2	Rukwangali, Afrikaans and English	Senior Secondary. Education	Not applicable	Rukwangali
11.	S. Board 3	Rukwangali and Afrikaans	Primary Education	Not applicable	Rukwangali
12.	S. Board 4	Rukwanagali and English	Primary Education	Not applicable	Rukwangali
13.	S. Board 5	Rukwangali and Afrikaans	Primary Education	Not applicable	Rukwangali
XXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX

*With one exception, all professional staff had appropriate qualifications and relevant teaching experience.*

The reason is that professional qualification is part of the job requirement for advisory teachers and teacher educators. This requirement does not apply to teachers at lower primary level. One of the three teachers in the selected school who took part in the study does not possess a lower primary professional qualification. However, this teacher has the most years of teaching experience of the three. It would seem that long-serving teachers without professional qualifications are made to teach at the lower primary level, which is considered 'easier' by school management and other authorities. Teacher educators and advisory teachers who participated had relevant teaching experience ranging from 9 years to 29 years.

The data shows that the professional participants possessed teaching diplomas, Post Graduate diplomas and degree qualifications, while the other participants had lower primary phase, primary education, and junior secondary and senior secondary qualifications. My conclusion is that completing teacher training and obtaining a certificate is not always a guarantee of effective teaching in schools. Tötemeyer (2010:26) points out that in Namibia, qualified teachers do not necessarily have a good command of English. Teachers need to receive quality education during their training that will enable them to handle and explain subject matter in their schools. Other studies have quoted cases in which students from colleges could write about Newton's laws of motion, but could not answer detailed questions on the same topic (Gee, 2003:22. Also see Stone 1992.).

With respect to quality education and effective teaching in teacher training, when students understand what is being taught they are able to see, feel, and put into practice their knowledge and experience in their individual ways, depending on their community's social practices (Gee, 2003:23).

### ***5.2.2 Language profile***

Table 2, clearly indicates that Rukwangali is dominant: 10 of the 13 participants were Rukwangali-speakers. The three teachers interviewed in the targeted school were Rukwangali speakers. The five school board members who participated in the group discussion in the study were also native Rukwangali-speakers. One teacher educator is a Rukwangali speaker, and the other speaks Afrikaans. The three advisory teachers each represented one of the local

languages used as medium of instruction at lower primary schools in the Kavango region, namely Rukwangali, Rumanyo and Thimbukushu.

Since these participants were all native speakers of the local languages it is clear that in principle, they may be suitable staff for the lower primary phase in the region, depending on the training they have received in the mother tongue they are required to teach. As one of the participants (**school board 1**) during the focus group discussion stated: “*Nsene muntu ga diva kuuyunga eraka olyo, kapi ta yi mu vhuru ku lironga.*” (If a person can speak a language, it would not be difficult to teach that language). Of course, the above statement is not convincing. Turker (1996:9) in NERA (2008:8) called this kind of view a myth. He pointed out that in developed countries such as the United States, nobody would expect a mother tongue speaker to teach that particular language without the relevant formal training. This means that teachers must have relevant qualifications in order to teach in a particular field.

**Table 3: Participants’ medium of instruction in Grade 1-3**

Participant	Rumanyo	Rukwangali	Thimbukushu	Afrikaans
Teacher 1	0	1	0	0
Teacher 2	0	1	0	0
Teacher 3	0	1	0	0
Advisory Teacher 1	0	1	0	0
Advisory Teacher 2	1	0	0	0
Advisory Teacher 3	0	0	1	0
Teacher educator 1	0	1	0	0
Teacher educator 2	0	0	0	1
School board 1	0	1	0	0
School board 2	0	1	0	0
School board 3	0	1	0	0
School board 4	0	1	0	0
School board 5	0	1	0	0
<b>Frequency</b>	1	11	1	1
XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX

*The result indicated that 100% of the sample had received three years of mother-tongue education in their early years of schooling, as recommended by the current language policy for schools in Namibia.*

Table 4: *Participants' medium of instruction From Grade 4 upwards*

Participant	Afrikaans	English
Teacher 1	1	1
Teacher 2	1	1
Teacher 3	1	1
Advisory T1	1	0
Advisory T2	1	1
Advisory T3	1	1
Teacher ed. 1	1	0
Teacher ed. 2	1	0
S. board 1	1	0
S. board 2	0	1
S. board 3	1	0
S. board 4	0	1
S. board 5	1	0
<b>Frequency</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>
XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX

*Relevant participants received their upper primary education or tertiary education in Afrikaans or English depending on the period in which she/he was schooling.*

The data shows that most of the participants in this study received their primary or tertiary education either in Afrikaans or in English or in both of these languages in the upper primary phase, during secondary education or in their teacher training. From participants' explanations, these teachers dealt with two languages that were not their first language in their education: Afrikaans and English, neither of which is related in terms of linguistic structure to the Rukwangali used as the medium of instruction in the target school.

Their lack of competence in those languages became apparent when participants were asked to suggest which language each felt confident enough to use during interviews or focus group discussions at the research sites. Only teacher educators and one teacher in the target school chose to communicate in English; the rest preferred their mother tongue. When they were asked why they chose to communicate in their mother tongue, **Teacher 1**, responded "Maybe, emh, maybe I can speak in Rukwangali, so that I can express myself well."

Furthermore, teachers were asked to rate themselves on language proficiency (speaking) in Rukwangali and English using a 5-point scale. The outcome was very clear. Each teacher

interviewed rated her- or himself high in Rukwangali and low in English. When they were asked the follow up question why they had rated themselves in this way, **Teacher 2** said: “Because in English, to understand, I understand, but coming to speaking, I struggling, as you can see.”

These findings are confirmed by the views of Senkoro (in Brock-Utne et al, 2003) who pointed out that “for the teachers/student teachers or learners to receive education in a language other than the language s/he speaks at home, they are robbed of their democratic right.” During interview sessions I realised that these participants – having been schooled and trained in Afrikaans and English in the Namibian system – have been robbed of their language rights all along. At every stage that they were introduced to a new language as medium of instruction, they were fighting two things at the same time: learning the language, and learning the subject content (Tötemeyer (2010).

An important aspect of the linguistic profiles is the fact that Afrikaans features much higher than English. This implies that most of the participants used Afrikaans as medium of instruction at upper primary phase before English took over and became their medium of instruction too.

We can conclude, therefore, that teachers who currently serve in the lower primary phase in the selected school are products of Afrikaans teaching and training, though they are expected to use teaching materials written in English. Teachers struggle to teach effectively in this situation, they are frustrated and deliver very poor teaching.

This study found that teachers still ‘code-switch’, or mix Afrikaans terms with English or Rukwangali in their teaching. Afrikaans has deep roots among teachers in the target school. In some cases, teachers repeatedly used Afrikaans terms. Words such as ‘*Rand*’ emerged several times in mathematics lessons conducted in Rukwangali.<sup>2</sup>

This situation led to the participants not being competent teachers. When a teacher is not competent in the language in which he or she has been trained, there is no doubt that such a

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<sup>2</sup> For example, instead of a teacher saying, ‘*yisilinga murongo*’ in Rukwangali (‘one Namibian Dollar’), she said ‘*randa zimwe*’. In another lesson, the teacher wanted to say ‘Nine Namibian Dollars and 90 cents’. This was stated as ‘*noranda ntane no yisilinga muyu*’. The term ‘*randa*’ was borrowed from Afrikaans during the colonial era. The official currency has changed from rands to dollars, but the Afrikaans influence still prevails among teachers. It is also clear that even Rukwangali native-speakers need to polish their native-language proficiency.



teacher would also have not gained enough knowledge from that particular training to be able to deliver effective teaching as required in school. Chamberlain (1993:4) also found that most teachers in northern Namibia were not able to express themselves properly in English, and meetings conducted in English were not fruitful.

### **5.2.3 Language attitudes**

**Questions 17 & 18 on learners focus group interviewing and a statement given by school board 5 indicated that English was more valued than mother tongue (Rukwangali) in the target school.**

The finding here is that with one exception, the majority of **school board members** (parents' representatives) and **learner no. 2**, wish English to be the medium of instruction in the lower primary phase in the target school.

Many people see African languages as primitive and think that they delay children's cognitive development when they are used as language of teaching (Heugh, 2000:15). NERA (2000:30) reported that in Namibia, local African languages are widely felt to stand for poverty, backwardness, underdevelopment, second-class education and traditionalism. Furthermore, Heugh (2000) and Rubagumya (1989:2) observed that many parents think that English is the only language that can deliver quality teaching and learning. However, Heugh's revised study on bilingualism does not support the view that African parents want only English for their children. She states that what parents want is effective teaching, and that examples of effective teaching and learning are found only in schools with adequate human and physical resources. This is only seen in schools that are well resourced, and often these schools are where English is used most. When parents send their children to such schools, the research concludes wrongly that they do so because they value English more than their own languages.

Previous studies have shown that many school communities in Namibia want English as a medium of instruction. Thus Harlech-Jones (1990:169) states that "it was evident during the interviews with school principals that half of those interviewed favoured the retention of the existing practice of switching to the language of wider communication as a medium of instruction in Standard 2".

### 5.2.3. *A Dominance and hegemony of English*

This is also one of the obstacles that hinder the smooth implementation of the language policy. This is clear from the statement made by **school board 4**: “*Kwange ko ame kuna hara vanona vava ronge mosiIngilisa, ipo yi va rerupe mo kuzogera nampili novantu peke wo ku tunda ko yirongo youre.*” (In my opinion, I prefer children to be taught through English, to prepare and to make it easy for them to communicate even with outsiders.)

The researcher understood, the concern of the interviewees that children need to know and speak English and it is a good choice of language to allow children to be able to communicate with people from other places outside their country, and to understand people worldwide. This view was also observed among parents in Tanzania by Rubagumya (1990:2) who reports that parents often reject Kiswahili (their local *lingua franca*) as the sole medium of instruction, because they believe that education is not possible without a European language, and they want their children to climb the ladder of success.

The respondent (school board 4) has the perception that a European language is the only important language in education that can provide quality teaching and learning. The response also implies that the respondent wishes to allocate more time to English practice and drill to enhance second language acquisition. This view also indicates that the respondent has an inadequate understanding of language acquisition and language proficiency. Other studies do not support this view; they argue that learning English as a second language does not need to be at the expense of first languages (Bloch, (2002), Heugh (2000). Totemeyer (2010: 62-63) agree with the statement by Mbaeva N.K, the teacher of history and Otjiherero at a Windhoek secondary school who complains that ‘where kids are taught to speak a second language at the expense of the mother tongue, (it) creates a semi-lingual society... They don’t speak any language properly... Afrikaans, for how long are we going to regard everything African as second best...? Our self-image, our culture and our identity are tarnished as we regard our own language as inferior to English... Learners who have gone through English medium from pre-school up to Grade 12 are still illiterate! ... The official language in a multilingual society must not be promoted at the expense of national languages...; a nation without a culture is like a tree without roots... We don’t have roots – therefore we do not acquire knowledge. A tree gets minerals and water through its roots.’

Another enemy of disregarding mother tongue education, in my view is Article 3, section 2 in the Namibian Constitution. This creates a loophole, since it allows parents or schools to choose any national language, including English, as the medium of instruction in the Lower Primary Phase. This provision encourages the disregarding of mother tongue education among school boards and learners at the selected school and in Namibia at large.

On the other hand, teacher educators, teachers in the selected school and advisory teachers reported that many teachers at the lower primary phase find it difficult to interpret the syllabi written in English (see Advisory teacher 2 and advisory teacher 3 on Question 5).

#### *5.2.4 Meta-linguistic knowledge*

**With respect to the answers elicited on question 3 to teacher educators (see page 35 above), question 5 to lower primary teachers(see page 40 above) and the views of school board members (see pages 51-53 above)on differences in medium of instruction in teacher education and at the lower primary phase, the following comments and conclusions are made.**

Yahya-Othman, in Rubagumya (1989:45-46) have pointed out that when pupils receive education in a language which they do not use except in the classroom, it may hamper their cognitive development, their questioning of ideas and facts and their interpretations of what is communicated to them. In my study participants were asked to share their individual views, perceptions and comments about the differences in the medium of instruction in teacher education and the language of teaching in the lower primary phase, with specific reference to the Kavango educational region. Three different perceptions were provided:

Teachers experience problems with some terms and vocabulary or with concepts that they need to teach learners but have to translate from English into Rukwangali. Teachers may know the terms only in English or only in their mother tongue (see the example: “Weaving Baskets”, defining the concept of “a family tree” and “colour concepts” in indigenous language). “Cultural connotations of certain words or practices are difficult to translate directly and materials as well as the language of teaching that are used have to take this fact into account.

#### 5.2.4a Participants' views on linguistic transfer

I understood **Teacher 2's** statement: "*Ame ku yimona asi, mitili-mitili tupu, ga kona ku papara magano goku gusa po udigu wendi. Hena eraka-eraka tupu kuvhura ku pirura*" (In my view, a teacher is a teacher; he or she needs to make a plan in order to overcome problems they come across. Also, a language is a language; it is possible to translate.) to mean that translation is possible and that a teacher can use this strategy to translate concepts or difficult terms from one language to another in order to overcome language difficulties they come across in their teaching. For modernising African languages and developing new terms in technical subjects like science, translation is one of the tools emphasised by researchers, such as Madiba (2001). This encourages African language speakers to embark upon translating from source languages and developing new terms, in order to bring indigenous languages on a par with those languages that have already developed these registers. This would enhance learning in schools.

I agree that translation is a valuable tool for use with respect to these problems, but it is only helpful (and possible) to a certain extent. Translation would not allow all necessary concepts to be translated from one language into another language by means of single terms. The link between language and culture is complex. One can express any thought or feeling in any language but the cultural overtones and resonances differ from group to group, and from one individual to another. The difference occurs because what is true in one cultural zone is not the same in another, and what is considered valid in one culture might not be valid in another (Gee, 2003). This includes the way individual ethnic groups do things, and the way each cultural group understands the world.

Thus, translation is not workable in every situation, more especially in the lower primary phase, where teachers deal with small children. Therefore there is no guarantee that one can rely on teachers' translation of subject contents and concepts (acquired through English, during training) into their respective mother tongues at the lower primary level. Linguists such as Catford, cited in Halliday (1965:22) describe different types of translations. For example, restricted translation means that translation from the source language is only possible with respect to phonological aspects. In translation, a translator might consider the grammar of the source language and leave out aspects such as stylistic features (Nord, 1993:60-61).

This implies that however hard the translator works, even the best-translated text will never be able to produce the same communicative effect as the source. Furthermore, Catford cited in Halliday (1965) argues that though this kind of translation may be possible; there can be no analogous ‘contextual’ translation, due to cultural differences. The difficulty teachers must overcome is finding appropriate cultural equivalents, a task they would not have been trained for – one more reason why they should be trained in the mother tongue as far as possible. Relying on translation I found it a being problematic. During interviews in the selected school I was told by (teacher 1) that an easy topic teachers find to teach (both in English and in mother tongue) is ‘colours’.

However, the following example illustrates one of the obstacles observed: Because the colour spectrum is segmented differently in the English and Rukwangali traditions, the conceptual spaces occupied by each ‘colour’ in each of the languages do not always coincide. Certain colours in English might differ from the ‘same’ colours in Rukwangali, but the teacher took it for granted that they could be explained the same way in Rukwangali as they were explained in English. Only the main colours from the Western culture were considered; the teacher forgot to mention that each colour might refer to another colour in Rukwangali. For example, observe the four pictures in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2: Colours**



Picture A



Picture B



Picture C



Picture D

In English, the colour of the fruit in the tree in Picture A is orange, the fruit in Picture B is yellow, the cow in picture C is brown and the shoes in picture D are red. In Rukwangali, all four of these colours can be referred as 'red', for various reasons. The shoes in Picture D are obviously red; but the fruit in both trees (Pictures A and B) may be called 'red' because they are ripe, and the cow in Picture C is also considered to be 'red' because domestic animals (cattle, fowl and cats) are categorised in three main colours, namely black, white and red, and the cow would fall into the 'red' category.

This kind of explanation was missed in the lesson presented, because the teacher was influenced by the English language. Also, the teacher taught 'inside the box', meaning she was bound by the knowledge gained during training, and was not able to use her own initiative in order to integrate the knowledge acquired within the community and share it with her learners. Learners need differentiation of colours: they live in the rural areas, where they look after cattle or collect wild fruits in the forest. They need to be clear on the way colours are used according to the Rukwangali culture. They need this kind of conceptual understanding to make things meaningful in their mother tongue when interacting with their peers, or with their parents at home. The explanation given above would enable learners to distinguish between colours, and to know when to use each colour and when to avoid it. I found that what teachers think to be easy was not reflected in their teaching; and consequently, teaching and learning at the lower primary level is not effective.

**Teacher educator 1** also reported how difficult it is to teach African students about the theme 'Family tree', especially when it is translated from English into an indigenous language. The reason lies in the way different culture groups define family members and kinship structures. These do not only differ from one culture to another, but even from one tribe to another tribe. For example, in Western culture a person has one father and one mother, and one grandfather and one grandmother on each parent's side. People become brothers and sisters if they have the same biological parents, and the rest of the relatives become uncles, aunts or cousins. In the Kavango tradition, your father's brother is also your father, and your mother's sister is also your mother. Kavango culture allows you to have more than one mother or father. Hence, teaching the concept of a 'family tree' through English and interpreting it in European terms

**Figure 3.** A poster showing a ‘family tree’.



might confuse student teachers with respect to the equivalent meanings in their respective mother tongues. It might happen that some student teachers take the wrong concepts, or literal translations, to school, confusing learners. I came across an example during any classroom observation:

Figure 3 above shows a poster on a lower primary phase classroom wall in the target school illustrating the concept of ‘family tree’. Student teachers brought a real tree branch to the class during the micro teaching, showing that they had the same idea depicted by the poster. The concept of ‘family tree’ was understood literally by some student teachers at the teacher training institution and also by teachers in the target school. Each leaf was labelled with the name of a family member. I was not convinced, since it was difficult to understand which leaf represented which title. I disagree with the ‘method’ shown by this illustration, because it is not easy to interpret a tree with its branches and its leaves as representing family members and defining their relationships. If we assume that the trunk of the tree represents the grandfather, which part of the tree represents the grandmother? If we assume that the different leaves represent parents (father & mother), which part represents the siblings? In my view, the ‘family tree’ concept was misunderstood and misinterpreted, and the misconception occurred because of language differences in understanding and interpreting ‘family’ and ‘tree’. This led to the researcher disagreeing with **teacher educator 2**, when she explained that student teachers need to be encouraged to use dictionaries to find meanings and vocabulary, because a dictionary is not always reliable.

### 5.3. CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Language was considered as a barrier to the effective teaching and learning based on the following findings from classroom observation done:

At teacher training institutions:

Interaction between teacher educators and student teachers was found to be different between the two classes observed. In one class, student teachers were allowed to give their input in mother tongue, and students' participation was higher than in the other class that stuck rigidly to English. In the class in which student teachers were instructed to use English only, students sometimes managed to provide their answers through drawing instead of orally (see Appendix A. Also see Haacke (1983:14) cited in Tötemeyer (2010:57). In my view, teacher educators who follow the policy of sticking to English only do not do it because of the policy, but because of the difficulty they experience in speaking or understanding the language their students speak. I concluded that the language policy was a barrier to effective teaching and learning, for both parties involved.

In the target school, one teacher barely managed to teach different colours in Rukwangali as elaborated in detail above (see p. 68 above)

### 5.4 PARTICIPANTS' OVERALL UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE POLICY MATTERS

The study has shown that the overall understanding of professional participants is that the language policy is contradictory. On the one hand, it prescribes two different languages at two related institutions that operate with respect to the same phase (English for teacher education, and mother tongue for teaching at the lower primary level in schools). Professionals see these two institutions as closely related. They gave the reason that the goal of training student teachers is to prepare them for teaching at the lower primary phase. In their experience, working with teachers trained through English and teaching through mother tongue misses the point of teaching for success in this phase. **Teacher educator 1**, and **teacher 1** and **teacher 3** saw a need for student teachers to practise their future work in the language they will use. The study has shown practical examples of how this difference between the languages of teaching



has definite pedagogical effects, and that teaching could be more effective if the mother tongue medium was also used in teacher training.

From the responses of most of the professional participants, teacher educators, lower primary teachers in the selected school and the Advisory teachers, it was clear that the difference in languages of teaching at the two institutions denies both teachers and learners access to the quality education the government strives for, as stated in the Ministry's policy document, *Education For All*.

On the other hand, with one exception, the understanding of most of the school board members – the representatives of parents in the selected school and of the learners who participated in the study– was different. The majority of these school board members are pleased with the current language policy. Using different languages (English for teacher education and mother tongue for lower primary teaching) does not seem to be a problem in their school, as far as they are concerned. They do not think there would be any negative effect on teaching and learning in schools, because they see a qualified teacher as able to transfer knowledge acquired through English into the mother tongue. Also, they think that teachers can easily translate what they have learnt in one language into the mother tongue. They see this to be normal, since this policy applies to all regions across Namibia.

In my view, teacher educators who follow the policy of sticking to English only don't do it because of the policy, but because of the difficulty they experience in speaking or understanding the language their students. I concluded that the language policy was a barrier to effective teaching and learning, for both parties involved.

Not all student teachers in the two classes observed at the College, or learners in the three classes observed in the selected school, speak the same language. In this case, whichever indigenous language is used as the medium of instruction would serve some of the students or learners better and yet marginalise others. This is due to the fact that the Kavango educational region is a multilingual and multicultural setting. In other words, the main finding of the study was that because most school communities (especially in the rural areas) use only indigenous languages in day-to-day social practices, the use of English as a medium language is a barrier for teaching and learning in teacher training institutions and in schools in the lower primary phase. The Namibian language policy contradicts itself, and does not serve effective teaching

and learning. “... *Interaction between teacher educators and student teachers as well as between teachers and learners, and their participation that enhances learning during lesson presentation...*” for Lower Primary Phase in the Kavango educational region is hampered by these differences in the languages of teaching for teacher education and teaching at lower primary phase in schools.

My study confirms the findings of other studies such as those of Tötemeyer (2010) and Munganda (2002) in Namibia as well as of studies outside Namibia that were conducted by experienced language scholars such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), Heugh (2000), Cummins (2000) and Bloch (2002), who found that mother tongue education at the foundation level provides for effective teaching and learning.

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## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 CONCLUSION**

This study has found that differences in the languages of teaching (medium of instruction) in the teacher education institution and of teaching in the target school in the Kavango region hamper smooth and effective teaching and learning.

It has also confirmed the fact that for economic as well as social reasons, indigenous language-speakers want English language proficiency. On the other hand, for pedagogical, cultural and broadly developmental reasons, in line with the position adopted by most specialists in this field, it is essential that English competence should not imply neglect or marginalisation of the indigenous languages.

It has become very clear that teaching at the lower primary phase in rural areas, where English is hardly used in daily operations, needs to be conducted through mother tongue-based, bilingual education. Lower primary phase student teachers at teacher-training institutions need to be prepared to use mother tongue-based, bilingual materials – and better understanding – in order for them to render effective service in the schools of their communities (Brock-Utne et al, 2003, Komarek 2003).

### **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the above, I suggest the following recommendations (in order of logic and urgency) to policy-makers, planners, implementers and other educational stakeholders:

1. There is an urgent need for a mother-tongue education advocacy campaign, since language policy is the vehicle that drives teaching and learning in schools. School communities need to be clearly and carefully sensitised so that they realise the need for and the importance of mother-tongue teaching in individual schools. In areas such as Kavango, where most parents are not as adequately literate as other school communities in other parts of Namibia might be, communities need to be informed by government, working with language practitioners and advisory teachers, in order to understand which language (mother tongue or second language English) is suitable

and workable in their area for effective teaching and learning, so they can expect the quality teaching referred to in government documents such as *Education For All*.

Such a campaign would be costly, but it is the only way to reach the masses. Only a thorough explanation will give a school community the courage to support effective teaching and learning; and they will only be able to do so if they have a good understanding of the purpose of language policy. In return, the success of effective teaching in schools will cover the cost of the campaign. Effective teaching and learning means that both teachers and learners must be able to understand and to apply the knowledge acquired on their own in practice. This can only happen in the language with which an individual is familiar; most in the area cannot function successfully using English.

2. Policy makers have to understand that for various reasons – differences in development, living pace, etc. – the medium of instruction that is workable for community A might not be the same for community B. For example, what works well in an urban school might not work well in a rural school, even though both these schools are to be found in the same region or country.
3. For reasons of economics, I suggest that the government needs to decentralise lower primary teacher training according to mother-tongue location. Teacher training institutions in the regions should take up the issue of mother tongue education and bilingualism and train accordingly. Bilingual training methods and dual-medium training of teachers needs to be implemented at teacher training institutions for student teachers, and the National Institute for Educational Development must help teachers who are already in the field.
4. The appointment of teacher educators for the lower primary phase at teacher training institutions needs to take local languages into account as part of the admission requirement.

5. The curriculum for lower primary phase teacher education needs to be revised to incorporate bilingual education, in order to prepare student teachers to handle mother tongue-based or bilingual education in their future schools. It is also necessary for student teachers to comprehend the importance of bilingualism for developing positive attitudes that they can use when they face the reality of children in the multicultural and multilingual setting of school communities. This will allow teachers to pay special attention to disadvantaged pupils and to serve as ambassadors, informing parents of the dangers of the early exit (subtractive language education) model and the need for and advantages of the late exit (additive language education) model. Teachers' work through mother tongue education must prove that teaching learners with this model from an early age serves as a foundation to prepare them for the proficiency in English.
6. Because teacher education is conducted in English, and student teachers are not trained in translation, it is recommended that it might be helpful to have a number of translation courses in the curriculum, to make student teachers aware of the distortions that may occur when they translate content from one language to another.
7. Terminology development is another area in need. There is a necessity for mother-tongue specialist courses at higher education institutions (universities), with curricula that cover courses in terminology development that might be useful in developing material for different subjects in different phases of education.
8. Also, it is recommended that Government establish an institution for mother tongue materials development. It should not rely only on NGO projects that come and go at the end of their contract and whose work is hard to sustain.
9. The National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) should offer courses for mother-tongue trainers and materials developers that cover as many subjects as possible in the educational curriculum, if the country is to have the relevant human and physical resources that are needed.

10. The National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) should offer short courses and workshops to help teachers in the field to cope with the situation at the lower primary phase level in the Kavango region.
11. At this stage, not many communities in the Kavango region have a clear understanding of what the impact of language (especially mother tongue) is on teaching and learning. More study of African literature is needed, for the individual school communities to understand what teachers and learners are experiencing with their teaching and learning in various subjects; and not necessarily only language subjects. Findings from the studies I have suggested may lead to some solutions that would benefit the people involved.
12. Teachers should be urged to do research in their classes, schools or school environment to investigate matters hampering their teaching and the learning of their learners, and produce recommendations that they can share with fellow teachers or parents, to the advantage of their school communities.
13. Because of the rapid growth of the Namibian population, and other developments that might change peoples' lifestyle and ways of perceiving and understanding things, it might be helpful if language policy-makers could review and re-evaluate the language policy for necessary modification as quickly as possible.
14. Last but not least, the loophole noted in the Namibian Constitution: The Namibian Government should revisit Art.3 section 2, which allows parents and schools to choose the language of teaching at Lower primary Phase (including English) from the first year of schooling. This has misled some communities to continue promoting English and to disregard the implementation of indigenous languages in education at the foundation phase. This loophole delivers poor children at the lower primary phase to the Sink or Swim scenario. This practice undermines and negates the purpose and the meaning of the language policy for Namibian schools.

In conclusion, all the deliberations and suggestions in this investigation were not merely for my own interest. I have tried to contribute to and support the government in what is stipulated in the constitution of the Republic of Namibia; particularly what is stated in the Education Act

on the language of teaching. Article 3 sections (2) implies that the education of the nation is in the hands of the people, and in a democratic country such as Namibia, individuals are encouraged to do anything to support the good ideas of those who came up with the valuable thought of producing quality citizenship through quality democratic education. At this point, it seems that the current language policy does not serve all communities in Namibia satisfactorily, because each region is unique, with differences in their communities' living style and development.

My ongoing concern is that at independence, we promised the youth quality education, and so far effective teaching and learning is still lacking in the lower primary phase. Therefore, we must find means and ways to fulfil the promises made, because the youth deserve the quality education promised and they cannot reach it without effective teaching and learning. Therefore this study does not end in a vacuum, without leaving a concern for further research:

'Policy-makers and language practitioners are urged to look into the matter of rural schools in the Kavango region; is Grade 4, the transition year (for changing from mother tongue to English as a medium of instruction), difficult for learners only or has it become difficult for teachers as well?' The studies suggested may lead researchers to arrive at results and recommendations that would benefit many education stakeholders in Kavango and elsewhere.

If the language policy-makers adhere to the recommendations of this study, and instruct the policy-implementers to do their part, there is no doubt we would see an improvement and eventually the quality education we desire. This can only occur through effective teaching and learning in schools. Without quality education, our generation's frustration will hurt our communities, regionally and countrywide.

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## **APPENDIXES . (A-M).**

A: Student teacher answer through drawings

B: Letter to the Director of Education

C: Director's letter to the researcher

D: Letter to the Acting Rector

E: Acting Rector's letter to the researcher

F: Letter to the selected school principal

G. Principal's letter to the researcher

H: UCT consent form to and from parents of learners participated.

I: Interview questionnaires for Teacher educators

J: Interview questionnaires for teachers at the lower primary phase participated.

K: Questionnaires for Advisory teachers participated

L: Focus group discussion for school board (Agenda).

M: Group interviewing Agenda for learners participated.

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